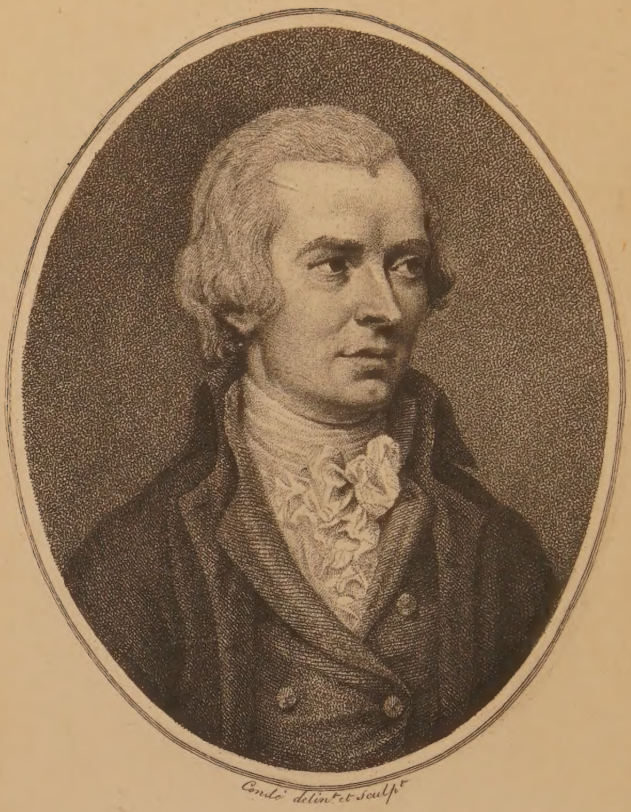
THE LIFE OF THOMAS HOLCROFT

"He has indeed gone before the world, as he says."



Thomas Holcroft
from a portrait by Condé
published in the European Magazine, December 1792

THE LIFE OF THOMAS HOLCROFT

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF
CONTINUED TO THE TIME OF HIS DEATH
FROM HIS DIARY NOTES & OTHER PAPERS
BY WILLIAM HAZLITT
AND NOW NEWLY EDITED
WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY
ELBRIDGE COLBY

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. II

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CONTENTS OF VOLUME TWO

THE LIFE OF THOMAS HOLCROFT (*continued*)

PAGE

BOOK IV: CHAPTERS ON POLITICAL INTERESTS 1

BOOK V: DIARY 121

BOOK VI: LETTERS CONCERNING EMIGRATION 253

BOOK VII: CLOSING YEARS . . . 285

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE 315

INDEX 321

ILLUSTRATIONS IN VOLUME TWO

THOMAS HOLCROFT . . . . . *Frontispiece*
From the portrait by Condé, published in *The European Magazine*, December, 1792.

FACE PAGE

PORTION OF A LETTER FROM HOLCROFT TO WILLIAM GODWIN, WRITTEN FROM NEWGATE IN 1794 60
Facsimile of the original letter in the Forster Bequest, Victoria and Albert Museum.

"HE'S MUCH TO BLAME" 104
Facsimile of the opening pages of William Dunlap's "Prompt Copy" of the First Edition (1798), with manuscript directions.

"LETTERS ON POLITICAL LIBERTY" 198
Facsimile of the title-page of Holcroft's copy of the First Edition (1782) of this book, by Rev, David Williams, with autograph note by Holcroft.

"A TALE OF MYSTERY" 300
Facsimile of the title-page of the First Edition (1802) with the autograph of Tate Wilkinson.

BOOK IV

CHAPTERS ON POLITICAL INTERESTS

CHAPTER I

MR. HOLCROFT had been, for some years, imbibing principles, and forming a system in his mind, relative to political and moral questions, considerably different from those which are generally received, or at least acted upon by the world.

The interest which he felt in the success of these speculations, will be best expressed by extracting some part of a letter to a friend, written in February, 1790. He says, "The great object I have in view, is not the obtaining of riches, but the power of employing my time according to the bent of my genius, in the performance of some works which shall remain when I am no more—works that will promote the general good. This is a purpose I have so strongly at heart, that I would with pleasure sacrifice ease, peace, health, and life for its accomplishment: nay, accomplish it I will, unless cut off in the midst of my labours. It has been my pursuit for years, and you are my witness, I have never relaxed, never been discouraged by disappointment, to which indeed I hold men of real strength of mind to be superior." A clever picture cannot be given of the motives from

which the writer appears to have engaged in and prosecuted his task—the regard of good men hereafter, and a wish to promote the general welfare of mankind, by diffusing a system of more just and enlightened principles of action.

These rational and worthy motives are those which actuated Mr. Holcroft's whole conduct in the part he took in such questions: they are the only ones which he had at heart, and he never seems in a single instance to have wavered in his pursuit, by flattering the prejudices, or soothing the vices of any set of men, by cajoling or inflaming the multitude, or by adapting his views or language to those of the ignorant, the rash, or profligate. He was a man of too honest, and of too independent a turn of mind to be a time-server, to lend himself as a tool to the violence of any party; his habits and studies rendered him equally averse to political intrigue or popular tumults; and he had no other desire than to speak the truth, such as he saw it, with a conviction that its effects must be beneficial to society. Whether his opinions were right or wrong, is another question: I speak here of his intentions. But I am anticipating the subject; and also deviating from my plan, which was not to write a panegyric, but a history.

Anna St. Ives, a novel in 7 vols. appeared in 1792.[1] It was much read at the time, and excited considerable attention, both from the force with which it is written, and from the singularity of

[1] Mary Wollstonecraft reviewed this book in *The Analytical Review* for May, 1792 (13 : 72).

the characters and sentiments. As a mere novel, it is interesting, lively, and vigorous. The natural or real characters it contains, are exhibited with great truth of conception, with strong and vivid colouring, and often with a great deal of whimsical eccentricity. The characters both of the proud, daring, impetuous, revengeful, capricious Coke Clifton, and of the sly, selfish, insinuating, cool, plodding, immovable Abimelech Henley, are master-pieces. The invention of either of these characters would stamp the author a man of genius. With respect to the first, however spirited the execution, the invention is beyond all doubt due to Richardson: Coke Clifton and Lovelace are the same being, and in fact are often placed in situations so similar, that the resemblance must strike the most cursory reader. Notwithstanding this, too much praise can hardly be given to Mr. Holcroft for the life, the enthusiasm, and glowing fancy with which he has sustained this character, and applied it to a different purpose. As to Abimelech, he is all his own; and he is a person of such quaint and ill-sorted qualities, his humility and his insolence are so oddly jumbled together, his knavery is so artfully disguised, and yet so easily seen through, and he delivers all his purposes in such a strange jargon of cant terms and phrases, every one of which has some end, though their connexion is scarcely intelligible; in short there is such a perfect consistence given to the most crude and shapeless mass, and this in a manner so unlike any thing else, that it seems almost equal

to the invention of a new language. That class of men who get introduced into gentlemen's families; and who, by plodding, hoarding, fawning, and flattering the follies of their masters, make fortunes themselves, ruin, and then trample upon their employers, were never better represented than in the person of Mr. Abimelech Henley. The steward in Castle Rackrent is not so very a knave by half.—The character of the Count de Beaunoir, though short, is managed with a great deal of humour and feeling. Mac Fane, the keeper of the madhouse, &c., are strong and real portraits.

But the principal characters in the novel (at least those which were intended by the author to be the most prominent), are not natural, but ideal beings. In fact, they are not so properly characters (that is, distinct individuals) as the vehicles of certain general sentiments, or machines put into action, as an experiment to shew how these general principles would operate in particular situations. Frank Henley, and Anna St. Ives, are the philosophical hero and heroine of the work. They are the organs through which the voice of truth and reason is to breathe, and whose every action is to be inspired by the pure love of justice.—Mr. Holcroft, by embodying his general principles in individual characters, no doubt, gained some advantages, which he could not otherwise have done; such as shewing the possibility of his plan, by actually reducing it to practice, and also pointing out how persons

convinced of the truths he wishes to impress, both may and ought to act in the present state of society. For instance, duelling is held to be criminal; and to shew that declining a duel is no proof of cowardice, Frank Henley, who received a blow from Coke Clifton, will not fight with him, but the very next day leaps into the water after him, and saves his life at the imminent hazard of his own: thus by an act of true heroism rising superior to the prejudices of false honour.

But though the author has gained in point of argument by throwing his reasonings into a narrative form, perhaps he has not lost in point of the general impression produced upon the mind. It was Mr. Holcroft's business to make his characters not only consistent, but interesting and amiable: and he has done nearly all that was possible to accomplish this end. But it seems as if the difficulty of the undertaking, from the very nature of it, was too great to be overcome. For in spite of all the appeals that are made to reason, and though we strive ever so much to suspend our invidious prepossessions, yet the old adage of "A faultless monster, which the world ne'er saw," continually obtrudes itself upon us, and poisons our satisfaction. It is true, our dislike may be irrational, but still it is dislike. That which, if left in generals, we might believe and admire, if brought to a nearer view, and exhibited in all its circumstances of improbability, we begin to distrust, and for that reason to hate: *quod sic mihi ostendis, incredulus odi.*

Perfect virtue, the pure disinterested love of justice, an unshaken zeal for truth, regardless of all petty consequences, a superiority to false modesty, a contempt for the opinion of the world, when reason and conscience are on our side, all these are fine things, and easily conceived, while they remain, what they are, the pure creatures of the understanding, mere abstract essences, which cannot kindle too warm a glow of enthusiasm in the breast. But when these airy nothings are made reluctantly to assume a local habitation and a name, called Frank, or Anna ; when they are personified in the son of a knavish steward, or the daughter of a foolish baronet ; when they are petticoated, booted and spurred ; when they are mounted on horseback, or seat themselves in a post-chaise, or walk arm in arm through the streets of London, or Paris,—the naked form of truth vanishes under all this pitiful drapery, and the mind is distracted with mean and contradictory appearances which it knows not how to reconcile. When familiarised to us by being brought on the real stage of life, and ascribed to any supposed characters, perfect virtue becomes little better than a cheat, and the pretension to superior wisdom looks like affectation, conceit, and pedantry. This effect must in some measure take place, even though the most perfect consistency and propriety were preserved : how much more then when the mind eagerly catches hold of every little flaw, to prove that the whole is a piece of acting, and to revert to its habitual

feelings of nature and probability?—It is not difficult to personify the passions, so as to render them natural: that is a language which men readily understand. But of the difficulty of exhibiting the passions entirely under the control of reason, of virtue, religion, or any other abstract principle, let those judge who have studied the romances of Richardson. To have made Clarissa a natural character with all her studied attention to prudence, propriety, &c., is the greatest proof of his genius: yet even she is not free from affectation. In Sir Charles Grandison, he has completely failed: he has exhibited him either as an automaton, a puppet, or a self-complacent coxcomb, "ugly all over with affectation," whose own perfection, propriety of conduct, and fine qualities, are never for a moment out of his sight. Rousseau's Julia, again, is something of a pedant, and cold, calculating, and insincere. I mention these instances to shew, that though I do not think Mr. Holcroft has rendered his hero and heroine so attractive as he himself probably thought they might be made, yet it was not for want of genius, but from the impossibility of the undertaking. Frank Henley, though a much nobler-minded being than Sir Charles Grandison, yet stands in general in the same predicament. We admire his actions, but we do not love the man: his motives we respect, but with his feelings we have little sympathy. Indeed he is a character who does not stand in need of our sympathy; "A reasoning, self-sufficient thing, an intellectual all in all." He

is himself a being without passions ; and in order to feel with him, we must ourselves be divested of passion.

I have made these remarks to shew the difficulty of embodying a philosophic character in a dramatic form.

The dignity of truth is in some measure necessarily lowered by coming to us "in so questionable a shape," and nothing but a very powerful mind can prevent it from becoming quite ridiculous and contemptible. Mr. Holcroft himself was perfectly aware of the prejudices he had to encounter in order to exhibit his characters, so as not to be misunderstood. He has not indeed been sparing of the most pointed raillery upon the philosophic pretensions of Frank Henley, in the letters of his rival, Coke Clifton. And the best proof of the strength with which he has conceived, and pourtrayed his favourite character is, that notwithstanding all the other's wit and eloquence, Frank is never once degraded in our esteem. He stands his ground firmly, and, upon the whole, has the preference, though it is not exactly such a preference as virtue ought to have over vice, wisdom over folly, or pure mind over sensuality and selfishness. An extract from one of Clifton's letters, in which he describes Frank Henley, will give a tolerable idea of the characters of both.

"The youth has some parts, some ideas : at least he has plenty of words. But his arrogance is insufferable. He does not scruple to interfere

in the discourse, either with me, Sir Arthur, or the angelic Anna! Nay sets up for a reformer; and pretends to an insolent superiority of understanding and wisdom. Yet he was never so long from home before in his life; has seen nothing, but has read a few books, and has been permitted to converse with this all-intelligent deity.

"I cannot deny but that the pedagogue sometimes surprises me with the novelty of his opinions; but they are extravagant. I have condescended oftener than became me, to shew how full of hyperbole and paradox they were. Still he has constantly maintained them with a kind of congruity that astonished me, and even rendered many of them plausible.

"But, exclusive of his obstinacy, the rude, pot-companion loquacity of the fellow is highly offensive. He has no sense of inferiority. He stands as erect, and speaks with as little embarrassment, and as loudly as the best of us; nay, boldly asserts, that neither riches, rank, nor birth have any claim. I have offered to buy him a beard, if he would but turn heathen philosopher. I have several times indeed bestowed no small portion of ridicule upon him; but in vain. His retorts are always ready; and his intrepidity, in this kind of impertinence, is unexampled.

"From some anecdotes which are told of him, I find he is not without personal courage: but he has no claim to chastisement from a gentleman. Petty insults he disregards; and has several times put me almost beyond my for-

bearance by his cool and cutting replies. His oratory is always ready; cut, dry, and fit for use; and d——d insolent oratory it frequently is.

"The absurdity of his tenets, can only be equalled by the effrontery with which they are maintained. Among the most ridiculous of what he calls first principles is that of the equality of mankind. He is one of your levellers! Marry! His superior! Who is he? On what proud eminence can he be found? On some Welsh mountain, or the peak of Teneriffe? Certainly not in any of the nether regions! Dispute his prerogative who dare! He derives from Adam; what time the world was all 'hail fellow well met!' The savage, the wild man of the woods, is his true liberty-boy; and the ourang-outang, his first cousin. A lord is a merry andrew, a duke a jack-pudding, and a king a tom-fool; his name is man!

"Then, as to property, 'tis a tragic farce; 'tis his sovereign pleasure to eat nectarines, grow them who will. Another Alexander he; the world is all his own! Aye, and he will govern it as he best knows how. He will legislate, dictate, dogmatise, for who so infallible? Cannot Goliah crack a walnut?

"As for arguments, it is but ask and have: a peck at a bidding, and a good double handful over. I own I thought I knew something; but no, I must to my horn-book. Then, for a simile, it is sacrilege; and must be kicked out of the high court of logic! Sarcasm too is an ignoramus, and cannot solve a problem; wit a pert puppy,

who can only flash and bounce. The heavy walls of wisdom are not to be battered down with such popguns and pellets. He will waste you wind enough to set up twenty millers, in proving an apple is not an egg-shell; and that *homo* is Greek for a goose. Duns Scotus was a school-boy to him. I confess he has more than once dumb-founded me with his subtleties. But, pshaw! it is a mortal waste of words and time to bestow them on him."—Vol. ii.

With respect to Mr. Holcroft's principles as they are delivered in Anna St. Ives, I shall here attempt to give a short sketch of them, of the train of events in which they originated, and of the seductiveness of the prospects which they held out to a mind not perfectly callous to the interests of humanity. Even could it be shewn that they were disgraceful to his penetration, yet they were certainly honourable to his heart, and they were highly honourable to human nature. It is indeed a little singular, that those who have augured most highly of the powers of our nature, and have entertained the most sanguine hopes of the future virtue and happiness of man, should so often have been considered as the worst enemies of society. But it seems that our self-love is not so much flattered by the idea of the progress we might hereafter make, as offended by that of the little we have already made. Reformers imprudently compliment mankind on what they might become, at the expense of what they are.

Mr. Holcroft was a purely speculative politician.[1] He constantly deprecated force, rashness, tumult, and popular violence. He was a friend to political and moral improvement, but he wished it to be gradual, calm, and rational, because he believed no other could be effectual. All sanguinary measures, all party virulence, all provocation and invective he deplored: all that he wished was the free and dispassionate discussion of the great principles relating to human happiness, trusting to the power of reason to make itself heard, and not doubting but that the result would be favourable to freedom and virtue. He believed that truth had a natural superiority over error, if it could only be heard; that if once discovered, it must, being left to itself, soon spread and triumph; and that the art of printing would not only accelerate this effect, but would prevent those accidents, which had rendered the moral and intellectual progress of mankind hitherto so slow, irregular, and uncertain.

This opinion of the progress of truth, and its power to crush error, had been gaining ground in this country ever since the Reformation; the immense improvements in natural and mechanical knowledge within the last century had made it appear nearly impossible to limit the discoveries of art and science; as great a revolution (and it was generally supposed as great improvements)

[1] "A theorist, a *littérateur* first, and a politician afterwards, who rather held aloof from practical affairs" (C. B. Roylance Kent, *The English Radicals*, p. 151).

had taken place in the theory of the human mind in consequence of the publication of Mr. Locke's Essay ; and men's attention having been lately forcibly called to many of the evils and abuses existing in society, it seemed as if the present was the era of moral and political improvement, and that as bold discoveries and as large advances towards perfection would shortly be made in these, as had been already made in other subjects. That this inference was profound or just, I do not affirm : but it was natural, and strengthened not only by the hopes of the good, but by the sentiments of the most thinking men.

As far as any practical experiment had been tried, the result was not discouraging. Of two revolutions that had taken place, one, that of America, had succeeded, and a more free and equal government had been established without tumult, civil discord, animosity or bloodshed, except what had arisen from the interference of the mother country. The other Revolution, that of France, was but begun : but it had at this time displayed none of those alarming features which it afterwards discovered.[1]

[1] " The sparks of liberty preserved in England for ages, like the coruscations of the northern Aurora, served but to show the darkness visible in the rest of Europe. The lustre of the American Republic, like an effulgent morning, arose with increasing vigour, but still too distant to enlighten our hemisphere, till the splendour of the French Revolution burst forth upon the nations in the full fervour of a meridian Sun, and displayed in the midst of the European world, the practical result of principles, which

Whether the difference of the result in the latter case was owing to the external situation of the country, which exposed it to the inroads of a band of despots; or to the manners of the people, which had been depraved by a long course of slavery, which while it made freedom the more desirable, rendered them the more incapable of it; whether, I say, the French Revolution might not have succeeded, had not every means been employed to destroy and crush the good that might have been expected from it, is a question not to be discussed here: but at the period of which I am speaking, I believe I may say there were few real friends of liberty who did not augur well of it. A tyranny, which all our most esteemed writers had been endeavouring for the last hundred years to render odious and contemptible to the English people, had been overthrown; and this was hailed by all those who had been taught to value the principles of liberty, or the welfare of nations, as an event auspicious to France and to the world. The emancipation of thirty millions of

philosophy had sought in the shade of speculation, and which experience must everywhere confirm. It dispels the clouds of prejudice from all people, reveals the secrets of all despotism, and creates a new character in men" ("Address to the National Convention by the Society for Constitutional Information," of which Holcroft was a member, here extracted from *Trial of John Horne Tooke*, ed. Blanchard, London, 1795, 1: 201–202). See also *English Opinion of the American Constitution and Government*, 1783–1798, by Leon Fraser, New York, 1915.

people (so I remember it was considered at the time) was a change for the better, as great as it was unexpected: the pillars of oppression and tyranny seemed to have been overthrown: man was about to shake off the fetters which had bound him in wretchedness and ignorance; and the blessings that were yet in store for him were unforeseen and incalculable. Hope smiled upon him, and pointed to futurity.[1]

With these feelings, and with these encouragements from the state of the public mind, reasoning men began to inquire what would be the ruling principles of action in a state of society, as perfect as we can suppose, or the general diffusion of which would soonest lead to such a state of improvement. And the answer was found, not so much in any real novelties, or heretofore unheard-of paradoxes, as in the most pure and simple principles of morality, differing from the common and received ones, no otherwise than in the severity with which they are insisted on, and in their application to a state of things in which the same indulgences, precautions, and modifications of our higher and paramount obligations, which are at present inseparable from the imperfection of our nature, would no longer be necessary. The whole of the *modern* philosophy (as far as relates to moral conduct), is nothing more than a literal, rigid, unaccommodating, and systematic interpretation

[1] He very emphatically put the golden age in the future, and not in the past. *Travels from Hamburg to Paris*, 1: 37.

of the text (which is itself pretty old and good authority) "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," without making any allowances for the weaknesses of mankind, or the degree to which this rule was practicable; and the answer to the question, "Who is our neighbour," is the same, both in the sacred records, and in the modern paraphrase, "He who most wants our assistance." I have mentioned this coincidence (I hope without offence), to shew that the shock occasioned by the extreme and naked manner of representing the doctrine of universal benevolence, did not, and could not, arise from the principle itself, but from the supposition that this comprehensive and sublime principle was of itself sufficient to regulate the actions of men, without the aid of those common affections, and mixed motives, which our habits, passions, and vices, had taught us to regard as the highest practicable point of virtue. If, however, it be granted, not only that it is in itself right and best, but that a period might come, in which it would be impossible for men to be actuated by the sole principles of truth and justice, then it would seem to follow that the subordinate and auxiliary rules of action might be dispensed with, being superseded by the sense of higher and more important duties.

Mr. Holcroft was among the foremost and most ardent of those who indulged their imaginations, in contemplating such an Utopian, or ideal state of society, and in reasoning on the manner in which the great leading principle of morality

would then be reduced to practice. In such a state of things, he believed that wars, bloodshed, and national animosities, would cease ; that peace and good-will would reign among men ; and that the feeling of patriotism, necessary as it now is to preserve the independence of states, and repel the ravages of unprincipled and ambitious invaders, would die away of itself with national jealousies and antipathies, with ambition, war, and foreign conquest. Family attachment would also be weakened or lost in the general principle of benevolence, when every man would be a brother. Exclusive friendships could no longer be formed, because they would interfere with the true claims of justice and humanity, and because it would be no longer necessary to keep alive the stream of the affections, by confining them to a particular channel, when they would be continually refreshed, invigorated, and would overflow with the diffusive soul of mutual philanthropy, and generous, undivided sympathy with all men. Another feeling, no less necessary at present, would then be forgotten, namely, gratitude to benefactors ; but not from a selfish, hateful spirit, or hardened insensibility to kind offices ; but because all men would in fact be equally ready to promote one another's welfare, that is, equally benefactors and friends to each other, without the motives either of gratitude or self-interest. Promises, in like manner, would no longer be binding, or necessary : not in order that men might take advantage of this liberty to consult their own whims or con-

venience, and trick one another, but that by being freè from every inferior obligation, they might be enabled more steadily and directly to pursue the simple dictates of reason and conscience. False honour, false shame, vanity, emulation, &c., would upon the same principle give way to other and better motives. It is evident that laws and punishments would cease with the cause that produces them, the commission of crimes. Neither would the distinctions of property subsist in a society, where the interests and feelings of all would be more intimately blended than they are at present among members of the same family, or among the dearest friends. Neither the allurements of ease, or wealth, nor the dread of punishment, would be required to excite to industry, or to prevent fraud and violence, in a state (such as has been supposed), where all would cheerfully labour for the good of all; and where the most refined reason, and inflexible justice actuating a whole community, could scarcely fail to ensure the same effects which at present result from the motives of honesty and honour. The labour, therefore, requisite to produce the necessaries of life, would be equally divided among the members of such a community, and the remainder of their time would be spent in the pursuit of science, in the cultivation of the noblest parts, and in the most refined social and intellectual enjoyments.

However wild and visionary this scheme may appear, it is certain that its greatest fault is in

expecting higher things of human nature than it seems at present capable of, and in exacting such a divine or angelic degree of virtue and wisdom, before it can be put in practice, as without a miracle in its favour must forever prevent its becoming any thing more than a harmless dream, a sport of the imagination, or "an exercise in the schools." But to consider a man as an immoral character, or a political delinquent, for having indulged in such speculations, is no less false or absurd, than to stigmatise any one as a bad member of the community for having written a treatise on the Millennium. Yet with respect to Mr. Holcroft, this appears to have been "the very head and front of his offending." [1]

[1] For the editor's critical discussion of this novel and of Holcroft's other important work see the article "Thomas Holcroft: Man of Letters," in *The South Atlantic Quarterly* for January, 1923. This novel and the play *Love's Frailties* were added to the Glasgow Circulating Library, along with *Caleb Williams* and *Mysteries of Udolpho* (Glasgow Courier, 25 Sept., 1794).

CHAPTER II

THE first part of Hugh Trevor, a novel, appeared in 1794, and the remainder in 1797. This novel is a work of less genius than Anna St. Ives, but it is characterised by much sound sense, by a clear and vigorous style, by acute observation, and by many satirical, but accurate portraits of modern manners. As a political work, it may be considered as a sequel to Anna St. Ives; for as that is intended to develope certain general principles by exhibiting imaginary characters, so the latter has a tendency to enforce the same conclusions, by depicting the vices and distresses, which are generated by the existing institutions of society. A Lord and a Bishop are among the most prominent figures. That such characters exist in fact, there cannot be a doubt; that the satire is applied in too general and unqualified a manner, is an objection which may also be readily admitted; but it certainly is not necessary, in order to enforce the *imperfection* of existing institutions and manners, that the profligacy which he has ascribed to these characters should be universal. A very little of it is enough, and too much—were there any real and substantial remedy for the evil.

The story of Hugh Trevor is less connected and interesting than that of Anna St. Ives: the excellence of the work is to be judged of from detached scenes and passages, rather than from considering it as a whole. Among the most striking passages are the description of Oxford, Wakefield's conversation with Hugh Trevor, the disputes with Trotman on the study of the law, the character of Olivia's aunt, which is in the best style of the old novels, the scene in the stage-coach between the aunt, Olivia, and Hugh Trevor, the description given by Glibly of the characters at the playhouse, and some of the scenes which occur in the history of Wilmot. The dialogues in Hugh Trevor are almost all of them highly spirited, and full of character, and the language exactly that of animated conversation. Mr. Holcroft would (as it might be expected), have an advantage in this respect over novel-writers in general, from his habit of writing for the stage. Perhaps the finest things in Hugh Trevor, are, the account of an author, found in Wilmot's pocket, after he had attempted to drown himself, and the song of Gaffar-Gray. Both these I shall extract, as they are short and detached, and, in my opinion at least, exquisite pieces of writing.

The paper found in Wilmot's pocket, after the rash, and almost fatal, act, to which he has been driven by repeated disappointment, and extreme distress, is as follows:

"This body, if ever it should be found, was

once a thing, which, by way of reproach among men, was called an author. It moved about the earth despised and unnoticed; and died indignant and unlamented. It could hear, see, feel, smell, and taste, with as much quickness, delicacy, and force, as other bodies. It had desires and passions like other bodies, but was denied the use of them by such as had the power and the will to engross the good things of this world to themselves. The doors of the great were shut upon it; not because it was infected with disease, or contaminated with infamy; but on account of the fashion of the garments with which it was cloathed, and the name it derived from its forefathers; and because it had not the habit of bending its knee where its heart owed no respect, nor the power of moving its tongue to gloze the crimes, or flatter the follies of men. It was excluded the fellowship of such as heap up gold and silver; not because it did, but for fear it might, ask a small portion of their beloved wealth. It shrunk with pain and pity from the haunts of ignorance, which the knowledge it possessed could not enlighten, and from guilt, that its sensations were obliged to abhor. There was but one class of men with whom it was permitted to associate, and those were such as had feelings and misfortunes like its own, among whom it was its hard fate frequently to suffer imposition, from assumed worth and fictitious distress. Beings of supposed benevolence, capable of perceiving, loving, and promoting merit and virtue, have now and then

seemed to flit and glide before it. But the visions were deceitful. Ere they were distinctly seen, the phantom vanished. Or, if such beings do exist, it has experienced the peculiar hardship of never having met with any, in whom both the purpose and the power were fully united. Therefore, with hands wearied with labour, eyes dim with watchfulness, veins but half nourished, and a mind at length subdued by intense study, and a reiteration of unaccomplished hopes, it was driven by irresistible impulse to end at once such a complication of evils. The knowledge was imposed upon it that, amid all these calamities, it had one consolation—Its miseries were not eternal—That itself had the power to end them. This power it has employed, because it found itself incapable of supporting any longer the wretchedness of its own situation, and the blindness and injustice of mankind: and as, while it lived, it lived scorned and neglected, so it now commits itself to the waves; in expectation, after it is dead, of being mangled, belied, and insulted."

The song of Gaffar-Gray is written in a less sombrous style, with a mixture of banter and irony. But it is distinguished by the same fulness of feeling, and the same simple, forcible, and perfect expression of it. There is nothing wanting, and nothing superfluous. The author has produced exactly the impression he intended.

"'Ho! Why dost thou shiver and shake,
Gaffar-Gray!
And why doth thy nose look so blue?'

'Tis the weather that's cold,
'Tis I'm grown very old,
And my doublet is not very new,
Well-a-day!'

'Then line thy worn doublet with ale,
Gaffar-Gray;
And warm thy old heart with a glass.'
'Nay, but credit I've none;
And my money's all gone;
Then say how may that come to pass?
Well-a-day!'

'Hie away to the house on the brow,
Gaffar-Gray;
And knock at the jolly priest's door.'
'The priest often preaches
Against worldly riches;
But ne'er gives a mite to the poor,
Well-a-day!'

'The lawyer lives under the hill,
Gaffar-Gray;
Warmly fenc'd both in back and in front.'
'He will fasten his locks,
And will threaten the stocks,
Should he ever more find me in want,
Well-a-day!'

'The 'Squire has fat beeves and brown ale,
Gaffar-Gray;
And the season will welcome you there.'
'His fat beeves and his beer,
And his merry new year
Are all for the flush and the fair,
Well-a-day!'

'My keg is but low, I confess,
Gaffar-Gray;
What then? While it lasts, man, we'll live.'
'The poor man alone,
When he hears the poor moan,
Of his morsel a morsel will give,
Well-a-day!'"

CHAPTER III

WE have hitherto beheld Mr. Holcroft only in the light of an author, or as a private man: we have at present to consider him in that part of his history, which was the most interesting to himself, of any of the circumstances of his life;—his behaviour under the most unaccountable, unjust, and groundless prosecution, which was instituted against him for high-treason, in the year 1794. The account of this transaction will be given nearly literally from Mr. Holcroft's own "Narrative of Facts," published soon after.[1] I shall only observe of this work, which is written in a style of manly and nervous eloquence, that it not only contains the most undeniable proofs of the author's innocence of the charge brought

[1] So much new material has been added by the present editor that this statement of Hazlitt's is no longer absolutely true of this chapter as it now stands. Some material concerning the *Letter to William Windham* has likewise been transposed out of the fourth chapter into this. It is with some little hesitation that I have tampered thus with Hazlitt's text; but I first firmly convinced myself that the transposition would improve the sequence of the narrative and the chapter unity.

against him, and of the knowledge which the prosecutors themselves had of his innocence, but that it farther shews Mr. Holcroft's character in a most amiable and respectable point of view. His regard to his family and friends, the steady uprightness of his mind, his ardent love of liberty, his utter abhorrence of all violent and sanguinary measures, and the sincerity, and even enthusiasm with which he acted up to the principles he professed, are evident in every line of his narrative.

It was in the month of November, 1792, that he first became a member of the Society for Constitutional Information.[1] The multitude of

[1] Hazlitt is corroborated by the evidence. Holcroft first attended on October 12, 1792, and regularly thereafter (*Trial of Thomas Hardy*, 2 : 32). Holcroft was on a committee which conferred with the Corresponding Society, on one to communicate with Sheffield, but otherwise did not take an active official part. Yet it was this very correspondence and co-operation that the Government later feared. His friend, William Sharp, was much more involved ; was frequently in the chair and on many committees. Yet Holcroft attended with but few absences, missing only about six of the fortnightly meetings in two years. He did not want to be too active. When on the joint Committee of Correspondence and Co-operation, Holcroft advised against violence and, fearful that partisan sentiment might hurt his literary and dramatic reputation, sought to withdraw from too conspicuous a position.

This society which Holcroft joined had been publishing tracts since 1779 ; the Revolution Society to which

extraordinary events which at that period happened in France, excited people of all ranks to political inquiry ;[1] and men were roused to a

Godwin belonged claimed an unbroken lineage since the Revolution of 1688.

For further data concerning these societies, see historical and bibliographical information in *Notes and Queries*, December 25, 1915, et seq. ; W. P. Hall, *British Radicalism*, 1791–1797 ; Laprade, *England and the French Revolution ;* H. N. Brailsford, *Shelley, Godwin, and their Circle ;* Wm. Playfair, *History of Jacobinism ;* the published trials of Hardy, Tooke, and Thelwall ; the valuable *Place MSS.* in the British Museum, 27,811–27,817 ; and Privy Council records classified as *Treason Trials*, used in so far as they affect Holcroft in an article, " Thomas Holcroft : Radical," by E. Colby, in *The Mid-West Quarterly*, October, 1917. It is worthy of note that Sharp did a particularly good engraving of Thomas Paine, and also engraved " The Declaration of Rights for the Constitutional Information Society " (Baker, W. S., *William Sharp, Engraver*, Phila., 1875, p. 86).

[1] The origin of the London Corresponding Society can be definitely traced to a dinner at the home of Thomas Hardy, an honest and innocent, religious-minded shoemaker. The three friends present agreed that reform seemed desirable and resolved to invite others to join them. In January, 1792, nine persons, all acquainted with each other, finished their daily labour and met at the sign of the Bell in Exeter Street. "After bread and cheese and port for supper, they lighted their pipes, discussed the hardness of the times and the dearness of all the necessaries of life, and finally turned to their main subject, Parliamentary Reform." *Memoir of Thomas Hardy. Written by Himself.* London, 1832, p. 13.

conviction, which, though obvious, yet seemed a recent discovery, that the political institutions of all nations essentially influence the morals and happiness of the people, and that these institutions are capable of improvement. The good was no sooner conceived than an eagerness to enjoy it was begotten; and this eagerness was frequently so impatient, as to excite a dread that even if it did not defeat, it might lamentably retard its own purpose.

At length, the apprehensions of those, who thought it their interest to prevent any kind of change, were awakened. Their numbers considerable, their wealth immense, their influence universal, their prejudices strong, and their appetites and passions almost their only means of enjoyment, they no sooner saw danger, than they conceived disgust for the supposed authors of it: and this disgust rapidly quickened into hatred. Animosity once conceived is generally mutual; and the passions of both parties seemed every day to become more and more inflamed, and to be pregnant with pernicious consequences.

Under such circumstances, it became (in Mr. Holcroft's opinion) the duty of every man to think seriously, and act with vigour.[1] Passengers in a storm labour at the pump, are upbraided if they linger, and in danger of being thrown overboard. Individual and general safety are the same; and the man who is not trusted with

[1] "Reform shall become the business of the nation," he declared. *The Monthly Review*, September, 1793, 12: 107.

the helm, may yet aid to heave the lead, or cast the anchor.

Mr. Holcroft, believing that all men, and all actions contribute more or less to the general good, had long been accustoming himself to keep that good in view. Stimulated by the considerations just mentioned, and by the events that pressed with daily astonishment on the mind; he ardently applied himself to the study of man, and the means of promoting his welfare, and lessening the evils that result from his present vices and imperfections. The chief of the principles, to which this inquiry led, were that man is happy, in proportion as he is truly informed; that his ignorance, which is the parent of his misery and vices, is not a fault, but a misfortune, which can only be remedied by infusing juster principles, and more enlightened notions into his mind; that punishment, violence, and rancour, only tend to inflame the passions, and perpetuate the mistakes they are meant to cure; and that therefore, the best and only effectual means of ameliorating the condition of mankind, is by the gentleness of instruction, by steady inquiry, and by a calm, but dauntless reliance on the progressive power of truth.

These principles being firmly rooted in his mind, Mr. Holcroft naturally became the opponent of all violence, and a determined friend to the publication of truth; since by that alone, he thought the well-being of mankind could be promoted. With respect to the Society for constitutional information, of which he had

become a member, he did not approve of many of their proceedings, nor was he altogether satisfied with the authority they seemed to assume of peremptorily deciding questions by a majority of votes, which he thought could only be decided by reason: but still he conceived that this was not a sufficient ground to absent himself from their meetings, as such an over-scrupulousness would exclude all those who were best calculated to prevent such societies, in their too great ardour to do good, from doing ill; since if he refused to act with men so long as they were guilty of mistake, he must banish himself wholly from their intercourse.

[All his life Holcroft was a believer in conversation and free discussion as a means of spreading truth. It was the custom of some of the London booksellers to give weekly dinners to their literary and other friends. There were sometimes found at the same table characters who would never have met together, except under the auspices of roast beef and Madeira wine. Malthus, who wrote the *Essay on the Principle of Population* in an attempt to refute *Political Justice*, was seated at a bookseller's dinner next to Mr. Godwin.[1] Wollstonecraft—then a mere hack—came to know Godwin in this manner through the publisher Johnson of St. Paul's Churchyard. It was at this same bookseller's that William Blake joined the radical group.[2] Earlier acquaintances, formed on the road in the strolling days, were renewed through meeting

[1] *Letters from London. Written by William Austin.* Boston, 1804, p. 236.

[2] Symons, *William Blake*, p. 68.

at book shops. So were the relations with Shield re-established; so with Ritson, who followed Holcroft into the republican calendar.[1] It was in this way that Holcroft first stalked into the life of the author of *Political Justice*.[2] And what better reason for believing in the efficacy of argument than Holcroft's own experiences with Godwin? Every Sunday they dined together.[3] They discussed letters and philosophy, Voltaire and politics. But they did more than merely "discuss." A passage often quoted assigns to Holcroft rank as one of the four principal oral instructors of Godwin.[4] And Godwin himself indicates exactly the matter of the instruction:

"My mind became more and more impregnated with the principles afterwards developed in my Political Justice; they were the almost constant topic of conversation between Holcroft and myself: and he, who in his *Skeptic* and other writings had displayed the sentiments of courtier, speedily became no less a republican and a reformer than myself."[5]

This was written in 1790. Which most influenced the other is an academic question. When they first became acquainted, neither Holcroft nor Godwin had yet imbibed those strong political sentiments which afterwards distinguished them. . . . It required the French Revolution to kindle that republicanism with which both were after-

[1] Nicolas, *Joseph Ritson*, p. liv; also *Letters*, Vol II, pp. 34, 39, 63, and Burd, *Joseph Ritson*, pp. 23, 176.
[2] C. K. Paul, *William Godwin*, 1: 357.
[3] Ireland, *Records of the New York Stage*, 1: 342.
[4] C. K. Paul, *William Godwin*, 1: 17.
[5] *Ibid.*, 1: 63.

wards inspired.[1] They discussed together with Mackintosh, David Williams[2] and Joel Barlow the principles of that book which was intended to further the cause of liberty. Godwin himself admitted:

"My mind, though fraught with sensibility and occasionally ardent and enthusiastic, is perhaps in its genuine habits too tranquil and unimpassioned for successful composition, and stands greatly in need of stimulus and excitement. I am deeply indebted on this point to Holcroft."[3]

These two men had thus worked and talked together, and *Political Justice* was the result. They had laboured with Brand Hollis to help bring out Paine's *Rights of Man*. Why should not more of such talk and more of such co-operation accomplish more? They therefore joined their respective societies, in the hope of spreading their doctrines.]

He entered this Society then with a firm determination to use every endeavour to prevent violence and acrimony, to communicate the truth he knew, or imagined he knew, and to stimulate others to do the same. Accordingly, while he remained a member of it, he never

[1] This is Mrs. Shelley's suggestion. C. K. Paul, *William Godwin*, 1: 25.

[2] A copy of Williams's *Letters on Political Liberty*, owned and annotated by Holcroft, is in the British Museum (8132, e. 47). Copies of Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvetius, and Holbach were in Holcroft's personal library. He also wrote critiques on these authors for *The Monthly Review* (see my Bibliography).

[3] C. K. Paul, *William Godwin*, 1: 361.

interfered with the framing of a single resolution; when questions were put, he sometimes voted; and sometimes spoke to declare his opinion, but was much oftener silent; either because he thought them frivolous, or such a mixture of right and wrong, as to leave him undecided. He little imagined that it would be possible to accuse their insignificant proceedings as treasonable: much less that he should be selected as one of the most wicked of the conspirators.

[The avowed intention of this society was parliamentary reform. Though one scholar thinks they meant bloodshed,[1] though the government became frightened and tried to prove treason against them, they really seem to have wanted nothing but "a radical reform of the country," "redress in legal method," and "the accomplishment of parliamentary reform." The chief activities were confined to spreading the writings of Thomas Paine in cheap editions, printing "Proclamations" and letters advocating their principles, and attempting to co-operate in these measures with various similar organizations.

But His Majesty's Government was cautious. The ministry trembled lest the example of America should lead to open rebellion and that of France to other October Days. Then, England went to war against the Republic of France; and the entire situation was changed. In the eyes of the Government, whoever found anything good in Frenchmen was a traitor; whoever displayed the least token of republican sympathies was

[1] Hall, *British Radicalism*, so holds. Laprade and Brailsford disagree.

an ally of the enemy. An assembly of delegates from these liberal clubs was broken up because it bore the title of " Convention " and, though really called to discuss and frame a general petition to Parliament, might conceivably try to ape the French Convention and seize the reins of power. The " ringleaders " were arrested and, after most unfair trials, transported to Botany Bay. Various special acts were rushed through Parliament to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act, to investigate suspected " seditious practices " and to suppress " traitorous correspondence." Search was made for proofs of the impending insurrection among the London clubs, to be raised, as it came out at the trials, by an army exercised in a first floor, a camp concealed in a back shop, an arsenal stored with nine muskets, a treasury of almost ten pounds, brass farthings and bad shillings included, and claiming proud support from linen drapers, shoemakers, perfume shop clerks, a host of spies, a couple of clasp knives, and a cavalry " cat." To such a height had party spirit risen that innocent men were accused of treasonable practices and intentions, who talked in private, when excited by contradiction or perhaps by a little unaccustomed wine, the " fearful " things they would never have thought of acting in public. Thomas Hardy characterizes the situation, in his memoirs, in the following words :

" So, having learned of some debating societies in town, where principles of the most dangerous tendency were propagated, where people went to buy treason at sixpence a head : where it was retailed to them by the glimmering of an inch of candle : and five minutes, to be measured by the glass, were allowed to each traitor to perform the great task of overturning the state : where other people passed the night in rehearsing harangues which began

with Mr. Speaker and wasted the day in considering how they should rearrange parliament,—in May 1794 the arrests were begun by the startled government. On October the second, a special Commission was opened with a charge to the Grand Jury. On October the sixth, a true bill of indictment was returned by the Grand Jury against Thomas Hardy, John Horne Tooke, John Augustus Bonney, Stewart Kyd, Jeremiah Joyce, Matthew Moore, John Thelwall, Richard Hodgson, and John Baxter, for high treason. Thus commenced the celebrated trial of the Twelve Reformers."]

The apprehensions of ministry had been first publicly announced in the proclamation[1] of the 21st of May, 1792: and the coercive measures on which they had determined, immediately appeared in parliamentary addresses, and the measures of the magistrates and municipal officers, throughout the kingdom. Associations were formed, and the danger of the constitution, from the wicked attempts of republicans and levellers, became the cry of what was called the aristocratic party. So active were these self-declared friends of government, and so loud in their assertions of approaching ruin, the destruction of property, insurrection, and anarchy, that quiet people began to partake of the fears of these agitators; and ministry, by more proclamations, asserted that insurrections did actually exist, which the militia was called out to quell, when not a hand or foot was stirring on any such

[1] "For preventing seditious meetings and writings."—W.-G.

pretences within the confines of Great-Britain. Men even of respectable characters and honest intentions now thought it an heroical act of duty, to watch the conduct of their intimate friends, excite them to utter violent or seditious expressions, and afterwards to turn informers against the intemperance they had provoked. To avoid giving any opinion was impossible. Language the most outrageous, was employed to make those who were in the least suspected declare their creed; and if it were not entirely accommodating, the peaceable citizen, after being entrapped, was insulted, and turned, or frequently kicked, out of tap-rooms, coffee-houses, and public places. The impotence of the obnoxious party was every where demonstrated; yet the outcry of alarm increased. Church-and-king-mobs were proved, in courts of justice, to have been encouraged by the very men whose office it was to keep the peace: while no insurrection, or shade of insurrection, appeared on the part of the people, wishing for reform. In the same spirit, printers and booksellers all over the kingdom were hunted out for prosecution; and the tempest of insurrection and anarchy was so confidently affirmed to be rising and raging, that the House of Commons voted the suspension of the Habeas Corpus bill, on the ground that dangerous and treasonable conspiracies did actually exist.

The Society, of which Mr. Holcroft was a member, seemed with the progress of these events to increase in amazement; and it might

almost be said, in stupefaction. This was visible in the thinness of its meetings, its feeble resolutions, and long adjournments. Each man saw himself the butt of obloquy. Each man knew that Mr. Reeves's association [1] was sitting in a room of the same tavern immediately over his head; and that this association was the focus of the opprobrium cast on them all. They supposed themselves to be watched by the very waiters. Thus wantonly and unjustly set up as a mark for public reproach, it is not much to be wondered at, that some petulant ebullitions occasionally burst forth. But was this guilt so enormous? Was it high-treason?

When Mr. Holcroft first heard that a few of its members had been taken into custody, he felt the greatest astonishment. "Surely," he said, "either there have been practices of which I am totally ignorant, or men are running mad!" The persons apprehended were severally, and some of them repeatedly examined before the privy council. The three estates of the kingdom had declared the existence of treason and conspiracy; and the nation seemed generally to credit the assertion. Mr. Holcroft had been told more than once, that a warrant was issued against him. Incredible as the rumour would

[1] John Reeves (1752–1829), first Chief Justice of Newfoundland, author, King's Printer, founder of the Association for Preserving liberty and property against Levellers and Republicans, Nov. 20, 1792. There is a mezzotint of him, 17×13¾ inches, "Painted and engraved by T. Hardy," and published by him, 1793.

have been at any other time, he now believed it to be true.

A warrant having according to report been issued against him, made it probable that he should also be examined before the privy council; and he therefore prepared for the event. The late John Hunter, and other medical men, had prescribed sea-bathing for him; and he intended to have gone out of town for this purpose.[1] But on the first report of the warrant, he determined not to go, and took care to appear publicly, that he might not seem to evade inquiry. Many surmises and rumours prevailed during the summer of 1794. One week the persons in custody were immediately to be brought to trial: the next it was said the crown-lawyers had declared that a case of treason could not be made out, and that they would be tried for seditious practices. At length, when the affair seemed almost to have sunk into forgetfulness, it was suddenly revived; and a commission was appointed on the till then supposed highly improbable charge of high-treason. The proceeding astonished Mr. Holcroft, as well as others; but he had no idea it was intended that he should be involved in it.

Soon, however, assertions to the contrary were spread: and many serious reflections suggested themselves to his mind. "Surely," said he, "this age has more general information, and therefore more virtue, more wisdom, than the

[1] In a letter he has recommended sea-bathing to his elderly father.

past. There cannot be another meal-tub plot. No Titus Oates could now impose his execrable fictions on mankind. Or is it possible that sophistry may have convinced itself that it is better twelve men, the partisans of reform, should die, than that Government should seem to have disgraced itself by asserting the existence of a treasonable conspiracy without any proof?" At one moment he could not believe himself in danger: at the next, the facts that stared him in the face destroyed every ground of rational calculation, and left the mind bewildered in suspense. It was at this period that Mr. Holcroft addressed the following letter to his daughter and her husband, who were in Devonshire.[1]

"My Dear Friends and Children,

"The reason of my writing to you at this moment is to prevent any unnecessary alarm; to which, indeed, I hope you would not have been very liable, even if I had not written, and if you had previously heard the strange intelligence I am about to communicate, through any other channel.

"It is asserted in the Morning Post of to-day, and I have before received the same information from various people, that a bill is to be presented to the Grand Jury, containing a charge of high-treason against thirteen persons, of whom I am

[1] Sophy, Mr. Holcroft's second daughter, had a little before been married to Mr. Cole, a merchant at Exeter.—Hazlitt.

one. As it is impossible that either this or any other crime against the Government can be proved on me (my principles and practice having been so totally opposite to such supposed crimes) I hope, and most seriously recommend that you will feel the same tranquillity I do. The charge is so false and so absurd, that it has not once made my heart beat. For my own part, I feel no enmity against those, who endeavour thus to injure me; being persuaded, that in this, as in all other instances, it is but the guilt of ignorance. They think they are doing their duty: I will continue to do mine, to the very utmost of my power; and on that will cheerfully rest my safety. I must again conjure you to feel neither alarm nor uneasiness. Remember the most virtuous of men are liable to be misunderstood, and falsely accused. But the virtuous man has no need to fear accusation. If it be true that my name is in the indictment, it will oblige me again to defer the happiness of seeing you, and the hope of recruiting my health by the excursion. Of the latter it is true I have need, and to be a witness of your happiness would give me no small pleasure: but the man of fortitude knows how to submit to all necessities; and if he be wise, frequently to turn events which others consider as most disastrous, to some beneficent end. Shall I own to you, that though I could not wish to be falsely accused, yet being so accused, I now feel an anxious desire to be heard? Let my principles and actions be inquired into, and published: if

they have been erroneous, let them become moral lessons to others; if the reverse, the instruction they will afford may more effectually answer the same purpose. I hope, Sophy, you know something of me: endeavour to communicate what you know to Mr. Cole, and your mutual fears will then surely be very few. Observe that, as I have yet received no notice whatever from Government, I have the above intelligence only from report. If it be false, I shall soon be with you: if the contrary, you of course will hear from me the moment I have any thing to communicate. Be happy, act virtuously, and disdain to live the slaves of fear."

Newman-street, Sept. 30th, 1794.

On the same day he sent the following letter to the Morning Post, which was published the next day:

"*To the Editor of the Morning Post.*

"SIR,

"In your paper of yesterday, my name is mentioned among those said to be inserted in a bill to be presented to a Grand Jury on Thursday next, containing charges of high-treason. If this be the fact, I have no wish to influence the public opinion, by a previous affirmation of my own innocence: I desire only to appear before my country. However, as I have not been a day absent from home for more than twelve months, and never received from any magistrate the least intimation of any suspicion against me;

till I have official notice, my own consciousness obliges me to consider your intelligence as unfounded.

"In either case, it is a duty I owe myself to declare that I am now, and always shall be, ready to answer every accusation."

The see-saw of contradictory reports continued for some days. A daily paper asserted, and as it professed, with authority, that the rumour of Mr. Holcroft's being included in the indictment was absolutely false: and a friend, who had determined (should it prove true) to give him every aid in his power, quitted town the very day before the bill was returned. Mr. Holcroft was preparing to do the same. Not only he indeed, but all his friends had concluded that the report would prove false, it being so excessively improbable. In this mistake he remained till Monday, October 6th, at three in the afternoon; when another friend came running to inform him that he had that moment come from Hicks' Hall,[1] where he had heard an indictment for high-treason read against twelve persons, of whom he was one. Mr. Holcroft's sensations were of a kind not easily to be described; but he neither felt excessive indignation, excessive alarm, nor any of those passions which might perhaps have been excusable in his situation.

[1] Formerly in St. John Street, Clerkenwell. It was built in 1612, by Sir Baptist Hicks as a sessions house, and abandoned in 1779.—W.-G.

The friend who had brought the intelligence, felt less determined. He was a man of an acute mind, but a lawyer ; and knowing the equivocal spirit of law, and the hazard incurred from the ignorance or prejudice even of the best-intentioned jurymen, he advised immediate flight. Mr. Holcroft had, however, no great difficulty in convincing him that his resolution was taken. He had now to communicate the event with as much caution as possible to his family. And here he had a most painful scene to undergo. His father (who was now with him) in a passionate burst of tears, intreaties and exclamations, conjured him to fly. His age, and the circumstances in which he had lived, rendered him a very unfit counsellor for such an occasion ; and the only means Mr. Holcroft had of calming his agitated spirits, was by the firmness of his own behaviour, his declared resolution to face his accusers, and, by appealing to his own knowledge of him, how far it was possible he should be guilty.

The intrepidity of his behaviour inspired his parents and children with courage. He thought it prudent however to leave them, that he might consult with his own mind, and with some friends, concerning the properest mode of surrendering himself ; and learning that the court was to meet the next day, at Hicks's Hall, he went to the house of his solicitor and friend, Mr. Foulkes, where, with some other persons, he supped. He did not return home, but slept here.

The next morning he appeared in court,

accompanied by his solicitor and another gentleman of the law; where, as soon as the business of the court would permit, he thus addressed himself to Lord Chief Justice Eyre.[1]

Mr. Holcroft. "My Lord, being informed that a bill for high-treason has been preferred against me, Thomas Holcroft, by His Majesty's Attorney General,[2] and returned a true bill by a Grand Jury of these realms, I come to surrender myself to this court, and my country, to be put upon my trial, that, if I am a guilty man, the whole extent of my guilt may become notorious; and, if innocent, that the rectitude of my principles and conduct may be no less public.[3] And

[1] Sir James Eyre (1734–1799), Chief Justice of the Common Pleas.—W.-G.

[2] Sir John Scott, Attorney-General, was counsel for the prosecution.

[3] It takes more than mere bravado or desire for publicity to do such things. With the fate of Palmer, Skirving, and Margarot as a precedent of convictions on an absolute lack of evidence, Sinclair had returned to Scotland in discharge of his faith as a private man towards his bail, and in discharge of his duty toward the public, not to take a fair trial as well he knew, but to prejudgment and partiality in sentence. William Godwin publicly identified himself with the cause of his friends by writing some remarkably able *Cursory Strictures on the Charge delivered by Lord Chief Justice Eyre to the Grand Jury* (London: Printed for, and sold by D. I. Eaton, 1794), and so ran the danger of likewise being branded by the Government. When put on trial, Horne Tooke interrupted some lawyers who were quarrelling over the identification of his handwriting by saying: "I can save

I hope, my Lord, there is no appearance of vaunting in assuring your lordship, this court, and my country, that, after the misfortune of having been suspected as an enemy to the peace and happiness of mankind, there is nothing on earth, after which, as an individual, I more ardently aspire than a full, fair, and public examination.—I have further to request, that your lordship will inform me, if it be not the practice in these cases, to assign counsel, and to suffer the accused to speak in his own defence? Likewise, whether free egress and regress be not allowed to such persons, books, and papers, as the accused or his counsel shall deem necessary for justification?"

Chief Justice. "With regard to the first, Sir, it will be the duty of the court to assign you counsel, and also to order that such counsel shall have free access to you at all proper hours. With respect, Sir, to the liberty of speaking for yourself, the accused will be fully heard by himself, as well as by his counsel; but with regard to papers, books, and other things of that kind,

the Court a great deal of trouble, for if they will be so good as to shew me what I wrote, I will admit it. . . . I protest I have never done an act,—I protest I have never had a sentiment,—I protest I have never had a thought of any important political nature, which, taken fairly, I have the smallest degree of disposition now not to admit. . . . I am anxious that my life and my character should go together. I wish to admit all that I have ever said, done or written" (*Trial of Tooke*, ed. Blanchard, 1795, 1: 260).

it is impossible for me to say any thing precisely, until the thing required be asked. However, Sir, you may depend upon it, every thing will be granted to the party accused, so as to enable him to make his defence.—If I understand you rightly, you now admit that you are the person standing indicted by the name of Thomas Holcroft."

Mr. Holcroft. "That, indeed, my Lord, is what I cannot affirm—I have it only from report."

Chief Justice. "You come here to surrender yourself; and I can only accept of that surrender on the supposition that you are the person so indicted. You know the consequence, Sir, of being indicted for high-treason. I shall be under the necessity of ordering you into custody. I would not wish to take any advantage of your coming forward in person, indiscreetly, in this manner, without being called upon by the ordinary processes of the law. You should have a moment to consider whether you surrender yourself as that person."

Mr. Holcroft. "It is certainly not my wish, either to inflict upon myself unnecessary punishment, or to put myself in unnecessary danger. I come only as Thomas Holcroft, of Newman Street, in the county of Middlesex; and I certainly do not wish to stand more forward than an innocent person ought to stand."

Chief Justice. "I cannot enter into this point. If you admit yourself to be the person indicted, the consequence must be, that I must order you to be taken into custody to answer this charge.

I do not know whether you are or are not Thomas Holcroft. I do not know you; and therefore it is impossible for me to know whether you are the person stated in the indictment."

Mr. Holcroft. "It is equally impossible for me, my Lord."

Chief Justice. "Why then, Sir, I think you had better sit still.—Is there any thing moved on the part of the crown with respect to this gentleman?"

Solicitor General. "My lord, as I consider him to be the person against whom a true bill is found, I move that he be committed."

Chief Justice. "I do not know how many persons there may be of the name of Thomas Holcroft: it would be rather extraordinary to commit a person on this charge, if we do not know him."

This produced a short consultation between the Solicitor General, the other counsel for the crown, and Mr. White. They were evidently surprised, and not pleased, at his appearance; and one of them, Mr. Knapp, began an argument to prove that he admitted himself to be the person indicted. He was interrupted by the Chief Justice, who again asked if the counsel for the crown thought fit to move that he should be committed? which was accordingly moved by the Solicitor General; and he was taken into custody by a Sheriff's Officer, Mr. Cawdron.[1]

[1] The warrant for the delivery into custody of the body of Thomas Holcroft (dated 7 October, 1794), the receipt for the warrant issued by the Keeper of Newgate

After naming Messieurs Erskine[1] and Gibbs[2] for his counsel, Mr. Holcroft asked the bench whether he might be allowed an amanuensis, while he was preparing his defence; but this request was declined by the Chief Justice, unless it was urged on the score of health. Mr. Holcroft was really in a state of ill-health; but as that was not his motive for asking it, he would not take advantage of this circumstance.

The court then adjourned; but he was detained three quarters of an hour: the reason assigned was, that the warrant was making out; but Mr. Holcroft believed the true reason to be, that the crown-lawyers were consulting how he was to be treated, and sending to the higher powers for instructions.

About half-past one o'clock the same day, a

(dated 7 October, 1794), and the Order issued for the trial of Thomas Holcroft (dated 10 October, 1894) are now being calendared in the Public Record Office: formerly they were in the Office of the Privy Council in bundles marked "Treason Trials, &c. A.37. 1794."

[1] Thomas Erskine (1750–1823), advocate and Lord Chancellor. He eloquently defended many prosecuted for political offences in 1793–4.—W.-G. He had been counsel in the Paine trials.

[2] Vicary Gibbs (1751–1820), afterwards Sir Vicary Gibbs, otherwise "Vinegar Gibbs" from his caustic manner, Attorney-General (1807–1820), and Chief-Justice of the Common Pleas (1814–1818). He was a shrewd and learned lawyer and was complimented by the Attorney-General on his successful defence of Thomas Hardy and Horne Tooke.—W.-G.

person came to Mr. Holcroft's house, in Newman Street, inquired if he was at home, and seemed at first unwilling to tell his business. He said he came from Mr. Munden[1]; but afterwards owned he was not a friend of Mr. Munden, but pretended that he had been with him to inquire Mr. Holcroft's place of abode. He repeatedly asked the Miss Holcrofts if they were sure he was not at home; and they by this time suspecting him to be an officer, replied, he might search the house, though he might be assured their father was not at home, for that he had never taught them to tell untruths; and to prove their sincerity, added, that he was gone to the Privy Council to surrender himself. "No;" answered he; "that he certainly is not; *for I am but just come from the Privy Council.*" He then shewed his watch, that they might take notice it was half-past one o'clock. Mr. Holcroft's daughters replied, that they might be mistaken, and if so, that he was gone to the Old Bailey.—Being now understood to be a messenger, they asked if he intended to come in and take their father's papers; for, on shewing his authority, he was at liberty to make any search. He replied, that *there was quite sufficient without the papers;* after which, he went away, saying, that if the accused had surrendered himself, it would save him trouble.

[1] Joseph Shepherd Munden (1758–1832), comic actor. He was a favourite actor for the part of Dornton in *The Road to Ruin.* See Lamb's *Elia*, "On The Acting of Munden."—W.-G.

These circumstances being related to Mr. Holcroft, led him to believe that a messenger had been despatched from Hicks's Hall to the Privy Council; and that to preserve the decorum of authority, this person had then been sent to his house: for the effrontery of surrendering himself was by his prosecutors and their partisans thought intolerable.

After waiting a considerable time, the warrant at length appeared, and the prisoner was attended to Newgate by the officer and one of the under-sheriffs; both of whom behaved to him with great politeness. Here, instead of being committed to close confinement like the other persons accused, he was allowed the same liberty of walking in the court-yard, and visiting his fellow-prisoners, which is granted to persons confined for inferior crimes.

The step which Mr. Holcroft had taken, as soon as it was known, excited the admiration of his friends, and probably of his enemies: though the latter were careful to keep this feeling within their own bosoms. The hireling prints of the day immediately began to pour out their dastardly sneers and mechanical abuse against him, converting an act of true fortitude, arising from conscious integrity, into the vapouring of a hypocrite, who wished to gain the reputation of courage without the risk. The following paragraph appeared two days after in the St. James's Chronicle:

"Mr. Holcroft, the play-wright and performer, pretty well known for the democratical

sentiments which he has industriously scattered through the lighter works of literature, such as plays, novels, songs, &c., surrendered himself on Tuesday at Clerkenwell Sessions House, requesting to know if he was the person against whom the Grand Jury had found a Bill for High Treason. After some little altercation, in which Mr. Holcroft seemed to affect some consequence, he was ordered into custody. This gentleman seems so fond of speechifying, that he will probably plead his own cause in part, though Counsel were assigned him. *We do not understand he is in any imminent danger; and suppose, from his behaviour, he has the idea of obtaining the reputation of a martyr to liberty at an easy rate.* We have that respect for some efforts of his talents, that we really hope his vanity will be gratified *with having run the danger, without suffering the punishment, of a traitor!*"

What a pleasant kind of government that must be, which is so fond of playing at this mock tragedy of indictments for high-treason, with any person who wishes to gain popularity at their expense, that the danger arising from their prosecutions is made a subject of jest and buffoonery, even by their own creatures! This miserable scribbler seems not to have been aware, that while he was accusing Mr. Holcroft of vanity and shallow cunning, he was bringing the most serious charge against the Ministers; as if they trifled with the lives and characters of an individual, on such absurd and improbable evidence, that not only the person himself, but

every one else, must laugh at his supposed danger. It was, however, in consequence of this fine opportunity, thoughtlessly afforded him by his prosecutors, for ensuring popularity "at an easy rate," that Mr. Holcroft was afterwards shunned by numbers of plain, well-meaning people, who were persuaded that high-treason was a serious thing; that he was branded as "an acquitted felon";[1] that he became a mark of venal pens and slanderous tongues; that he met with continued unrelenting hostility in his attempts to succeed as a dramatic writer; that he was at last driven from his country as a proscribed man; that when abroad he was singled out, suspected, and pointed at as a spy; and that after he returned home, harassed by repeated disappointment, he closed a life of literary labour and active benevolence, with a fear that his name might remain as a blot upon his family after his death. And all this, because Mr. Holcroft had by some strange accident, through sport or wantonness, been included in an indictment for high-treason: for his innocence was so notorious, that at the time he delivered himself up, he was insulted by the partisans of the Minister for having wished to purchase the reputation of a martyr at an easy rate; and that he was afterwards acquitted without being even brought to a trial, there not being the least evidence, or

[1] This phrase was used by the Hon. William Windham in a speech in Parliament and was the occasion of Holcroft's pamphlet, *Letter to The Hon. William Windham.*

shadow of evidence, against him. Mr. Holcroft was not only not called upon to make any defence, but he was prevented from making one, as altogether unnecessary and impertinent, the prosecution against him having been withdrawn. Could a prosecution of this kind reflect real disgrace on the person so accused and so acquitted?

Locked within the walls of Newgate, Mr. Holcroft had full time for meditation. His first duty was to defend himself by shewing the falsehood of the accusation: but it was a duty which at this time he knew not how to discharge. He had no documents, nor could he tell of what he was accused.

He had remained in this suspense a few days, when Mr. Kirby, the Keeper of Newgate, one morning came, desired that he would follow him, and led him through the otherwise impassable gates to an apartment in his own house. Here he was introduced to Mr. White, the Solicitor for the Treasury, and his two clerks; and this gentleman presented him with an indictment, a list of witnesses, and another list of the jurymen summoned for these trials: informing him at the same time that the Crown would grant as many subpœnas, without expense, as he should think proper to demand. Mr. Holcroft received the indictment, bowed, withdrew, and was reconducted to the place of confinement.

His eagerness to examine the charges brought against him, the list of the witnesses who were his accusers, and the names of the persons by some of whom he was to be tried, was great:

so was the astonishment he felt after examining the papers. He was indicted with eleven other persons in the same bill, for whose actions he was to answer, when, or wheresoever committed, though totally without his knowledge or participation. There was not a specific statement of any one action of the prisoner: but general affirmations concerning the collective actions of twelve men, together with other unknown conspirators, which, with regard to himself at least, he knew to be absolutely, and without exception, false. A promiscuous list of 208 witnesses was also given him, nine-tenths of whom were utter strangers to him, in person, abode, and even name; and of whom not one had any possible charge to bring against him. Yet he was left, out of all this inexplicable confusion, to conjecture (if he could) who were his accusers; and of what they were to accuse him. Mr. Holcroft intended to have entered a protest to this effect against the indictment, but he was overruled by his counsel.

The Tuesday following the trials began.[1]

[1] If Holcroft was "one of the most fiery and violent spirited of all that motley crew of persons" (Hazlitt, *Collected Works*, ed. 1902, 4: 233), Hardy, "an honest shoemaker, who little dreamt, God Help him, how near he had been to overturning the constitution" (Thos. Moore, *R. B. Sheridan*, 3rd ed., 1823, 3: 92), was the most inoffensive. Yet it was Hardy who was singled out as the arch villain of a band whose motives were so innocent that they were not at all afraid of persons coming among them, who were so open in their dealings

[Holcroft's further activities during the two prison months which followed (October to December, 1794) are not completely told in his Narrative of Facts, which has been freely used by Hazlitt. His literary labours were interrupted and two works particularly were delayed past the proper season for production.[1] But he was not entirely cut off from the world of his friends and interests. His amanuensis was finally allowed to visit him.[2]

that " every document relative to this redoubted conspiracy had been published long before the Report of the Secret Committee " (*ibid.*, 3 : 361). Well might Hardy have opened his eyes in amazement in 1831 : " The King and his Ministers turned Parliamentary Reformers ! committing the very same crime, that [the] Pitt and Dundas infamous government charged the reformers in the year 1794 with, the highest crime known to our laws, High Treason " (Letter to J. C. Hobhouse, British Museum, *Add. MSS.* 36,466, fol. 309).

[1] *Narrative of Facts*, p. 64.

[2] A communication through Mr. Fawkner to the Privy Council from Mr. Jno. Foulkes, " solicitor for Mr. Holcroft," was written " to desire Access to Mr. Holcroft for Mr. John Gill, his Amanuensis, without whose assistance he will be very much inconvenienced in preparing for his defence, having been in the constant habit of committing his thoughts to Paper by means of this Man " (*Treason Trials*, A.37. 1794). This was answered by another official document, now among the same papers, which I give in full :

" 14 Octr. 1794. It is this Day Ordered by Their Lordships, That Mr. John Gill be permitted from Time to Time, and at convenient Hours, to Visit Thomas Holcroft, a Prisoner in His Majesty's Gaol of Newgate, and

He wrote a preface for the bookseller Symmonds.[1] He received a hundred pounds payment for The Rival Queens, just played.[2] Mrs. Inchbald "neither felt alarm about herself, nor would desert her friend; but went immediately with Robinson the publisher in a coach to Newgate to visit him: nor should it be forgotten that, a very short time before this happened, she wrote a letter to acquaint him, that, in consequence of the novel which he had just published, she broke off all acquaintance with him."[3] Others showed their concern. Erskine, the eminent lawyer, gave his service without remuneration. Gilbert Wakefield, though otherwise wholly unconnected with the group, exerted himself in promoting a subscription.[4] Mark Wilks, a Norfolk farmer, delivered "collection sermons" and printed them, for the benefit of the accused persons.[5] Amelia Opie attended all the trials, but did not preserve her personal record of them.[6]]

[The evidence for the prosecution in many passages reads like testimony for the defence, and the true intent of the societies was clearly brought out. Here is the

that he be permitted to remain alone with him for the purpose of transcribing any Papers for which he may have Occasion in consequence of his approaching Trial."

[1] See my Bibliography.

[2] On October 23, 1794. British Museum, *Egerton MSS.* 2293, fol. 8.

[3] Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald*, 1: 330. "A lady of the most amiable private manners."—John Williams's (Anthony Pasquin's) *Children of Thespis*, Second Part, 1787, note on Mrs. Inchbald.

[4] *Life of Gilbert Wakefield*, London, 1804, 2: 68.

[5] *Athaliah*, Norwich, 1795.

[6] Brightwell, *Life of Amelia Opie*, p. 52.

examination of a witness relative to that society to which Holcroft belonged:

A.—There was nothing I heard that gave me any notion of treason.

Q.—And you had no notion that any of the members had any idea of treason?

A.—No, not of treason.

Q.—Either to depose or kill the King?

A.—Oh! No.

Q.—Or to use force by arms?

A.—No; I never had an idea of that sort.

Q.—Do you think they were either bold enough, or strong enough?

A.—No.

Q.—Neither?

A.—Neither.

Q.—What does Mr. Adams think was the object of the greatest part of the society?

A.—The greater part was for Parliamentary Reform.[1]

"After trials—which were a disgrace to the prosecution, and the government which instigated them—Hardy, Thelwall, and Horne Tooke were freed. The public interest was very great and the public acclamations at the acquittals were stupendous. The verdicts were in each case the signal for thunderous applause in the court room, which the judges neither tried to suppress nor reprove. The crowded streets without took up the rejoicing and a sympathetic shout broke forth which was caught and echoed to every part of the metropolis in an instant.

[1] *Trial of Horne Tooke*, 1: 97. The same motive was developed with respect to the Corresponding Society in the *Trial of Thomas Hardy*, 3: 301, 313, 321, 329.

No telegraph, no artificial organ could convey the news with the electrical velocity of their enthusiasm. It was known at the remotest corners of the town in a minute after the event, and the satisfaction was as general as the interest which was felt in the cause." [1]]

"And perhaps this country," says Mr. Holcroft, "never witnessed a moment more portentous. The hearts and countenances of men seemed pregnant with doubt and terror. They waited, in something like a stupor of amazement, for the fearful sentence on which their deliverance or their destruction, seemed to depend. Never surely was the public mind more profoundly agitated. The whole power of the Government was directed against Thomas Hardy; in his fate seemed involved the fate of the nation, and the verdict of Not Guilty appeared to burst its bonds and to have released it from inconceivable miseries, and ages of impending slavery. The acclamations of the Old Bailey reverberated from the furthest shores of Scotland, and a whole people felt the enthusiastic transports of recovered freedom."

Though no person partook more largely than Mr. Holcroft of the general joy, it was not on his own account. It was a conviction which he could not get from his mind, that his accusers had never any intention of producing evidence against him. Yet knowing how dangerous it might be to be found unprepared, he had laboured at his own defence with the same ardour as if he were

[1] See *Annual Register*, 1794, pp. 266, 268, 279; *The Morning Chronicle*, November 24, 1794.

sure of being brought to trial: and the belief that he should not, was the only thought that gave him pain. To be thus publicly accused, and not as publicly heard, to have it supposed through the kingdom that he was involved in transactions, which though surely not treasonable, were such as he could not but highly disapprove and of which he never heard until the reports of the Secret Committee were published, this was an evil which he would have given his right hand to have avoided. After the trial of Mr. Tooke, he plainly foresaw that he should not be called upon for his defence. He hoped, however, that he should be permitted to state a few simple facts concerning himself in the open court: but neither was this allowed him.

[Anxious to vindicate himself, he wrote to ask the assistance of his friend Godwin:

If I should be brought to the bar to be acquitted without trial, I wish to state to the jury the exact evidence that was given before the Privy Council, by the persons who were examined relative to me. Mr. Sharp is the principal of them; but I believe Messrs. Blake, Symmonds and probably Frost gave some evidence. I wish to know accurately if they did what it was, and should be obliged to you if you would apply to each of them personally, lead them to the subject in the best manner you can conceive, show them the importance of exposing the iniquity of the prosecution, and after having made memorandums yourself of what they have said, if they say anything, prevail on as many of them as you can to write, separately to me, the substance of what they would

PORTION OF A LETTER FROM HOLCROFT TO WILLIAM GODWIN WRITTEN FROM NEWGATE IN 1794

(Forster Bequest. Victoria and Albert Museum)

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the Privy Council concerning me on the meeting
the Committee, "I had made a speech, and talked
great deal about peace and benevolence, as I
ways did"; or something to this purpose: and the

second that he had informed them, "I was a natural Quaker; that is, that I had all the pacific principles of the Quakers, but none of their religion"; or to that effect. Pray extract all this as fully and as accurately as you can. Arthur Blake, I think, informed me of something very essentially to the same purpose; though I have forgotten what. Of Symmonds too either I am deceived or I have a similar recollection. I do not imagine I shall see Frost, now Cooke is gone. Blake did live in Devonshire Street; Symmonds in Crown Office Row, Inner Temple: Frost I suppose had lodgings in town. But Sharp perhaps can give you information concerning any of them. He may likewise happen to know some other witness, examined at the Privy Council, that has spoken concerning me. Be as full in your inquiries as you can. I know I need not apologize to you for wishing to communicate serious and beneficial facts to the public — The reason of my wishing them to write to me is the effect that it would have upon the Jury if given under their own hands

T Holcroft

DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE & ART FORSTER BEQUEST 1876

Newgate
Nov: 24th

have deposed had they been called upon to give evidence before a jury. I take it for granted I need not detail the reasons of all this—Mr. Sharp I recollect gave me twice information of what he had said. The first time as I remember it was that, when questioned by the Privy Council concerning me on the meeting of the committee, "I had made a speech, and talked a great deal about peace and benevolence, as I always did"; or something to this purpose: and the second that he had informed them, "I was a natural Quaker; that is, that I had all the pacific principles of the Quakers, but none of their religion"; or to that effect. Pray extract all this as fully and as accurately as you can. Arthur Blake, I think informed me of something very essentially to the same purpose; though I have forgotten what. Of Symmonds too either I am deceived or I have a similar recollection. I do not imagine I shall see Frost, now Tooke is gone. Blake did live in Devonshire Street; Symmonds in Crown Office Row, Inner Temple: Frost I suppose has lodgings in town. But Sharp perhaps can give you information concerning any of them. He may likewise happen to know some other witness, examined at the Privy Council, that has spoken concerning me. Be as full in your inquiries as you can. I know I need not apologize to you for wishing to communicate serious and beneficial facts to the public—The reason of my wishing them to write to me is the effect that it would have upon the jury if given under their own hands. T. Holcroft.

Newgate,
Novr. 24th.[1]]

[1] From original in the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, No. 267, in the Forster Bequest, through the kindness of the Director.

Mr. Holcroft was committed to Newgate on the 7th of October, where he remained eight weeks within a day. On Saturday, November the 29th, he received the following notice :

" The KING against THOMAS HARDY, and others.

" I am directed, by Mr. Attorney-General, to inform you that it is his intention that you should be brought to the bar at the Old Bailey, on Monday morning next ; and that a jury should then be sworn for your trial, but that he does not propose to give evidence against you upon this indictment.

JOSEPH WHITE,
Solicitor for the Crown,
29th Nov., 1794.

" *To Thomas Holcroft,*
one of the defendants in
the above indictment."

On Monday, December 1st, Mr. Bonney, Mr. Kyd, Mr. Joyce,[1] and Mr. Holcroft, were put to the bar ; and in the language of the

[1] Stewart Kyd (d. 1811), lawyer and writer, who later defended the publisher of Paine's *Age of Reason* from a blasphemy charge. Jeremiah Joyce (1763–1816), miscellaneous writer, was tutor to the sons of Lord Stanhope, at whose house, Chevening, Kent, May 4, 1794, he was arrested for treason.—W.-G. Cf. the Appendix to Joyce, *A Sermon Preached on Sunday, Feb.* 23, 1794, where his circumstances are given *in extenso.*

court, honourably acquitted. The other gentlemen bowed, and retired:[1] Mr. Holcroft attempted to speak, and the Chief Justice seemed at first willing that he should go on, though a thing not customary; but Mr. Holcroft having intimated that he should detain the court nearly half an hour, he was immediately ordered to withdraw. Whether he was not wrong in expecting such a favour, and consequently in subjecting himself to a refusal, I will not here pretend to determine; but I confess it was a mistake, which men in general may safely blame, for it proceeded from motives which few persons are capable of feeling.

The chief circumstances which Mr. Holcroft meant to have stated in the defence he had drawn up, were, that his prosecutors had proof that, instead of being a traitor, a mover of war and rebellion, and a killer of kings, he was a man, whose principles and practice were the very reverse. That evidence to this effect had been given before the Privy Council; and that there was no evidence whatever that he was in any instance a disturber of the public peace. That in the Constitutional Society of which he was a member, and under pretence of which he had been indicted for high-treason, he was theoretically the adversary of all force whatever; and that practically he concurred with the members who were most desirous of promoting reform, in

[1] Bonney, Kyd, and Joyce had previously agreed tc maintain perfect silence. Cf. Joyce, *A Sermon Preached on Sunday, Feb.* 23, 1794, App. p. 17.

urging that it must be by the peaceable means of persuasion; by the conviction of the understanding, not by force of arms. The proofs which Mr. Holcroft had of these particulars, were the evidence of Mr. Sharp, the engraver, and Mr. Symmonds.[1] Mr. Holcroft having written to Mr. Sharp, desiring an account of his examination, received the following answer :

"*Copy of my* [*that is, Mr. Sharp's*] *testimony, which I signed at the Privy-Council.*

"The Society for Constitutional Information adjourned, and left the delegates in the room. The most gentleman-like person (of the Corresponding Society), took the chair, and talked about an equal representation of the people, and of putting an end to war. Holcroft talked about the Powers of the Human Mind."[2]

"This" [says Mr. Sharp], "is the whole that

[1] William Sharp (1749–1824), engraver, republican, and enthusiast. H. D. Symmonds, of 20 Paternoster Row, publisher of Holcroft's *Narrative of Facts* and *Letter to William Windham*.—W.-G. Sharp appears in the character of Turl in *Hugh Trevor*, and Symmonds is mentioned in the diary.

[2] The official records of the Privy Council indicate that this was the same meeting at which Holcroft said that coaches should only be permitted to the aged. They likewise show that Sharp was depending on his memory, for the official record says: "Holcroft introduced a Conversation on the Powers of the Human Mind which lasted an hour and a half and the meeting broke up without any business being done" (*Treason*, II. A.35 (b) 1794).

I signed. The other particulars of the conversation before the Privy-Council are as follows.

"Mr. Holcroft talked a great deal about Peace, of his being against any violent or coercive means, that were usually resorted to against our fellow-creatures; urged the more powerful operation of Philosophy and Reason, to convince man of his errors; that he would disarm his greatest enemy by those means, and oppose his fury.—Spoke also about Truth being powerful; and gave advice to the above effect to the delegates present, who all seemed to agree, as no person opposed his arguments. This conversation lasted better than an hour, and we departed. The next time the delegates met, Holcroft was not present. This is the substance of what I remember of that conversation."

Mr. Sharp was again examined before the Grand Jury; and this was his evidence. "I mentioned Mr. Holcroft's disposition and conversation, when we met, about reasoning men out of their errors, who was a sort of natural Quaker, and was for the peaceable means that philosophy and reason point out to convince mankind. He was *against violence of all kinds;* but did not believe in the secret impulses of the Spirit, like the Quakers."

The evidence of Mr. Symmonds was to the same purpose.—Mr. Adams, also, the secretary of the Constitutional Society, had several times declared his utter astonishment that Mr. Holcroft in particular could be indicted; because of the repeated and ardent manner in which he, and

every body had heard him declare his sentiments in favour of peace and non-resistance.

[These scraps of evidence may now be supplemented with exact transcripts from the minutes, taken from the papers of the Privy Council:

(*Endorsed*): 9 June 1794.
Treason.
(Copy)
Examination.
Mr. Willm. Sharpe.
John Williams.
At the Council Chamber, Whitehall,
the 9th of June 1794.
Examination of Mr. William Sharpe.

. . . . .

As to the Entry 4th April 1794—being asked if the entry of the preceeding meeting was then read over to him, he said he dared to say it was.

He was then asked as to the appointment of the Delegates, and he said, that *Wardle*, *Sharpe*, *Joyce*, *Holcroft* and *Kyd* were appointed to meet Delegates from London Corresponding Society, and confer with them—they did so—it was about 9 o'clock—he remembers their coming in. Thewall was one of them—he knew him—the rest he did not. It was at the Society for Constitutional Information, "the other Members than the Delegates were then withdrawn."

Nothing was resolved upon at that time, but to meet another night.

He recollects *Holcroft* introduced a philosophical Disquisition about improving the human Mind—This took up a long time, and they did no Business.

About three or four days after that, they were to meet again by appointment: it was agreed the Examinant should have Notice of the Meeting from Joyce—but Joyce sent no Notice, and did not go himself as the Examinant understands.

At the next Meeting of the Society for Constitutional Information the Delegates of the London Corresponding Society came to denounce them for not attending.

Four or five days after he was called upon by Joyce to go down to Thewall's House in Beaufort Buildings to confer with the other Delegates.

He went there—found *Joyce*, *Thewall* and he thinks *Wardle*—The Delegates of London Corresponding Society were all there at one time or other—they went in and out of the room: but he thinks *Holcroft* did not attend—does not know whether *Kyd* did. . . .

. . . . . .

He remembers a Resolution respecting the King's Speech, being put under an Address of London Corresponding Society.

He admitted Letters were addressed backwards and forwards between Took and him as *Citizen*, which he thought innocent—tho' he disapproved the Idea of a Convention and French Equality.

He said there were many who entertained French Ideas of Equality,—*Holcroft* was one with these Principles he thought no Man should have a Coach 'till he was grown old.

A great many infected with the French Principles were of London Corresponding Society. . . .[1]]

[1] Privy Council Records, *Treason. Draft Minutes*, II. A.36B. 1794.

On evidence like this was Mr. Holcroft indicted and committed to prison as guilty of high treason.

The only circumstance which seems to throw any light on this mysterious transaction, which resembles a dream, or the extravagance of a bewildered imagination, rather than anything real, is the following. Some months before the presenting the bill of indictment, Mr. Holcroft had called, with another friend, on Mr. Sharp, who had been apprehended, but was suffered to remain in his own house in the custody of an officer. Mr. Holcroft made some remarks intimating his dislike of violence. This the officer, who was a King's messenger, but of a lower and more illiterate order, seemed to feel as an attack upon his profession ; and turning to Mr. Holcroft, whom he no doubt conceived to be a dangerous person, he affirmed that he had seen him at the meetings of the Corresponding Society. This was denied ; and he again asserted he had seen him there. The man who could imagine and persist in one falsehood, might imagine and persist in another. On his repeating his assertion, Mr. Holcroft said to him, " It is a wicked lie, Sir." The man afterwards said, that if he had not seen him at the Corresponding Society, he had seen him at Mr. Thelwall's [1] lectures ;

[1] John Thelwall (1764–1834), reformer, disseminated political views by means of lectures on Roman History. Later, he was a popular lecturer on elocution.—W.-G. He was included in the indictment and after trial was acquitted. See Hall, *British Radicalism*, for an account of his radical opinions and activities.

to which Mr. Holcroft replied, that he had been present once, and never but once, at a lecture delivered by Mr. Thelwall. This short scene was however, construed into a design to affront the officer, produce violence, and favour the escape of Mr. Sharp; over whom, on the man's reporting this tale at the Privy Council, a double guard was placed the next day.

Such is the history of the share which Mr. Holcroft had in the trials for High Treason.[1]

The remainder of Mr. Holcroft's pamphlet is taken up with Letters to different persons concerned in the prosecution, and the larger defence which he had prepared in case he should be brought to a trial. They evidently shew more virtue, firmness, and honesty, than prudence or management, and denote something of the raised tone of the public mind. In the letter to Erskine, which is a truly eloquent composition, the following trait is mentioned. While Erskine was examining the spy Alexander, who, had he

[1] Stewart Kyd, who on June 4th gave evidence of the second joint meeting of the delegates from the two societies and remarked: "Every delegate attended but Holcroft . . ." (*Treason*, II. A.36 (b) 1794). The testimony of Thomas Symmonds, given on the 14th of June to the Council, may explain Holcroft's absence. Speaking of a meeting of the Society, not the Committee, he says: "The appointing of Stewards was not done in a public way. The Witness was asked to be one and declined it—so did Holcroft, who stated that he did not wish further to injure himself in the Public Opinion by taking so open a part."

not been detected, might have sworn away the life of Hardy; this eminent barrister, observing his downcast countenance, and suddenly interrupting him, exclaimed—"Look at the jury, Sir! Don't look at me. I have seen enough of you."

Mr. Holcroft, in the second part of his defence, labours the point of a parliamentary reform; and among other proofs of the corrupt state of representation, cites the following curious one.

"The Borough of Gatton,[1] within these two years, was publicly advertised for sale by auction: not sold for a single parliament; but the fee-simple of the Borough, with the power of nominating the two representatives for ever. On the day of sale, the celebrated auctioneer scarcely noticed the value of the estate. The rental, the mansion, the views, the woods and waters, were unworthy regard, compared to what he called *an elegant contingency!* Yes, the right of nominating two members to parliament, without the embarrassment of voters, was *an elegant contingency!* 'Need I tell you, gentlemen,' said he, glancing round the room with ineffable self-satisfaction, and exulting in what he called 'the jewel, the unique, which was under his hammer; need I tell you, gentlemen, that this *elegant contingency* is the only infallible source of fortune, titles, and honours, in this happy country? That it leads to the highest situations in the state? And that, meandering through the tempting sinuosities of ambition, the purchaser will find

[1] A "pocket borough" or "rotten borough" between Merstham and Reigate, Surrey.

the margin strewed with roses, and his head quickly crowned with those precious garlands that flourish in full vigour round the fountain of honour? On this halcyon sea, if any gentleman who has made his fortune in either of the Indies chooses once more to embark, he may repose in perfect quiet. No hurricanes to dread; no tempestuous passions to allay; no tormenting claims of insolent electors to evade; no tinkers' wives to kiss; no impossible promises to make; none of the toilsome and not very clean paths of canvassing to drudge through; but, his mind at ease and his conscience clear, with this elegant contingency in his pocket, the honours of the state await his plucking, and with its emoluments his purse will overflow.' "[1]

The "Narrative of Facts," was shortly after followed by the "Letter to William Windham," in consequence of the expression "acquitted felons," applied by him to the persons lately tried. This letter is written in the spirit of a philosopher addressing a philosopher. It is certainly one of the best productions of the day. It is temperate, firm, acute, and forcible. Of the spirit in which it is written, equally remote from insipid affectation, or vulgar abuse, the introductory paragraph may be given as an example. It is as follows.

"SIR,

"The members of the House of Commons have arrogated to themselves many customs and

[1] This paragraph was printed as a footnote to the original *Memoirs*.

privileges; which they consider, some as rights to indulge in parliamentary invective, and others, as limitations to those rights. Personalities affecting members of that house, are contrary to order; but men, unprotected by the sanctified walls of St. Stephen's chapel, may be the objects of assertions, which, if made any where else, would subject the authors of them to such correction as the law affords; or as honour, half idiot, half demon, demands. For my own part, I should never attempt to unsheath the sword of the law, much less the sword of the assassin: at least, if it were possible to oblige me to the former, the case must indeed be extreme. Under such defence as the law affords, I have been, and may again be obliged to shield myself against false charges; for I have no better public protection. But that a man of keen sensibility, and quick apprehension, whose distinctions and discriminations are frequently so fine drawn, and so shaded that like colours in the rainbow, their mingled differences cannot be discerned; that a man who labours to be so cautious in his logic, should so often be hurried into the spleen of a cynic, the rashness of a boy, and the petulance of a child, is something extraordinary. There may be many such characters, but they are seldom so situated, as to obtrude themselves so frequently and forcibly as you have done into public notice. However, when they do, they are well worthy the attention of the politician and the philosopher, the man of business and the man of science. My purpose in this address, is not to write a libel, or

to display my talents for satire. It has a more worthy purpose. It is to warn you and the nation against effervescence of your passions. The intemperance of public men is tremendously awful at all times; but when it plunges millions into all the miseries of war, it rises into inexpressible horror. It is strange, that from real benevolence of intention, mischiefs which fable ascribes to fiends, should be the result. Yet this apparent paradox has of late been too repeatedly, and too carefully proved. You, Sir, and that extraordinary man, Mr. Burke, whose kind, but erroneous heart; whose splendid, but ill-employed talents, have led you astray, are among the examples."

It was not my intention to have troubled the reader with any farther remarks on the subject of the trial; but there is one passage in Mr. Holcroft's letter, which exposes the sophistry and the injustice of the phrase, which is the subject of it, in so clear and masterly a manner, that I cannot forbear quoting it.

"Figure to yourself, Sir, the first on the list of these acquitted felons, Hardy. What were his views? What his incitements? A man of no learning, excellent in his morals, simple in his manners, and whether they were wise or foolish, highly virtuous in his intentions. Do you imagine he meant to make himself prime minister? Were these the marks of a prime minister? Had he the daring spirit, the deep plans, and the towering genius of a Cromwell? No one will affirm things so extravagant. He was a good and

an active man in his endeavour to procure a parliamentary reform. This he thought, and I think, would have been the greatest of public blessings. For this he was tried, and declared NOT GUILTY. The whole country rang with the verdict, and the affections of the people were divided between joy at his deliverance and their own, and the contemplation of an innocent man, who had so long been in danger of the most dreadful and barbarous death, the merciless law decrees. Compare such a man to an 'acquitted felon,' who has escaped by the means you have enumerated: a man, who so far from exciting the benevolent wishes of a whole people, keeps all who ever heard his name in a state of dread, lest he should meet them on the highway, or break into their houses by night, and murder them in their sleep. Some such action, perhaps many such, he has already committed. At last he is taken; and knowing no better mode, they hope by his death to be freed from their fears. They are disappointed: a flaw in the indictment, a misnomer, or some technical blunder is committed: he is set free, and they are again subject to his depredations, and to all their former terrors. Will you affirm, Sir, that there are any common qualities, any kindred sympathies, any moral resemblance, between such a man and Thomas Hardy? Whatever the feelings of the people of England were before these trials, be assured they cannot now endure a repetition of such odious falsehoods. You could not be then ignorant of the public sentiment, and in your burning haste

to do right, you could not be guilty of this intolerable wrong, were your imagination less heated, and your intercourse with different ranks of people more general. You may perhaps now and then hear a dissentient voice : but you usually mix with men, who, like the parrot educated on board a man-of-war, can only repeat the same outrages, and the same insults. You hear nothing else, and nothing else can you say. Would, Sir, you would keep better company ! "

The very just distinction which Mr. Holcroft draws between the errors of such men as Pitt and Dundas,[1] who were actuated almost entirely by interest and ambition, and those of men, like Burke or Windham,[2] who were actuated almost

[1] Henry Dundas, first Viscount Melville (1742–1811), a trusted friend of Pitt's, and a member of his government. He practically ruled Scotland for thirty years. Cf. Cockburn's *Life of Francis Jeffrey*, pp. 74 *et seq.*, and Sir H. Craik's *A Century of Scottish History*, vol. ii, p. 91. —W.-G. Holcroft attacked him quite ferociously in *Hugh Trevor* as an unprincipled politician whose chief activity was misrepresentation.

[2] Though the character of Mr. Windham, as a statesman and orator, was less developed at that time, than it has been since, it seems to have been justly appreciated by our author. He considered him as the disciple of Mr. Burke ; and it is certainly some distinction to be able to understand the arguments, and follow the enthusiastic flights of that great, but irregular mind. He is at present (with one exception) the ablest speaker in the House of Commons : but he is still, and ever will be nothing more

entirely by imagination, system, and reasoning, shews that the letter-writer himself was not a vulgar politician; joining in the common cry of a party.

[If ever a document lent itself to quotation to show the temper of the man who wrote it, and the feelings under which he was labouring, it certainly is this one. So, in spite of the fact that Hazlitt has already given a

than an imitator of Burke. There is in all his speeches, an infinite fund of wit, of information, of reading, of ingenuity, of taste, of refinement, of every thing but force and originality: but of these last, there is a total absence. All is borrowed, artificial, cast like plaster figures in a mould. The creations of his mind are as multiplied, and they are as brittle. Perhaps it may be thought that the want of originality is the last thing which should be objected to this delightful speaker, all whose sentences sparkle with singularity and paradox. But this effect is equally mechanical with the rest. Real originality produces occasional, not systematic paradox. He who always waits to contradict others, has no opinion of his own. It is as easy to predict the side which Mr. Windham will take on any question as to guess what the first old woman you meet, would think on the same subject; for you may be sure that his opinion will be contrary of hers. His creed is a sort of antithesis to common sense, and he is as much the slave of vulgar prejudices in always opposing, as if he always yielded to them. Originality consists in considering things as they are, independently of what others think, singularity is mere commonplace transposed. The one requires the utmost exercise of the judgment, the other suspends the use of it altogether. (These remarks were written in 1810, before Mr. Windham's death.)—Hazlitt.

long extract, we shall here offer another passage or so, chiefly for the further illumination of the interesting personality of Holcroft himself:

"These men, after their conduct had been scrutinized by every effort which the power of Government could make, after a Secret Committee had sat and the alarmists made their alarming reports, after an extra-judicial bill had been found against the persons accused by both Houses of Parliament, after a grand jury had been instructed in a solemn charge how they might legally send men to trial for life or death for a supposed conspiracy, after the Solicitor for the Treasury had been authorized further to instruct this jury how to return a true bill, after the man against whom the heaviest obligations were brought had endured a trial of eight days in which means so nefarious and tools so despicable were employed as almost to make Mr. Pitt blush, after a second and a third supposed ringleader had endured scrutinies no less obstinate though more desponding, after the Right Honourable Mr. Pitt and the Most Noble Duke of Richmond had been compelled to appear and give evidence in favour of the accused, after spies and reports and private correspondence and letters purloined and King's messengers, and pettyfogging lawyers and Treasury Solicitors and Newgate Turnkeys and Bow Street runners had all been examined, and—to sum up the whole—after the persons accused had been set free by an unequivocal and deliberate verdict of *Not Guilty* and the prosecution dropped in despair, still these men, tried in this extraordinary manner were pronounced 'acquitted felons.'

Sir, the mind turns with loathing from the rancour of such an assertion, the wickedness of such a prosecution, and the errors of such prosecutors. Was it not

enough to have suffered imprisonment, defamation, loss of property, loss of character, and the hazard of loss of life? To have been hawked about the streets like Tyburn malefactors? To have been sung in ballads as Jacobins and Cannibals? To have been exhibited on handkerchiefs as traitors, caged in the cells of Newgate? To have been kept in the most awful suspense, from the fatal and horrid sentences likely to follow; not because of our guilt, but of the prejudiced and angry state of the public mind, which had been inflamed to this excess by artifices so flagitious and abominable as these? Could not all this satiate the fury you had fostered, but you must still pursue us; you must still endeavour, since you could not hang, to hunt us out of society? Acquitted felons! Recollect yourself, Sir, I appeal to your sober moments; or if sobriety be quite extinct in you, I appeal to the common feelings of my countrymen; all of them liable, as the persons charged with treason have been, to the pains and penalties that may result from false accusation; subject to the same calumnies, the same false imprisonment, and the same impossibility of redress; Is this justice? Is it not the sure token of a mind jaundiced with acrimony to a dangerous excess? . . .

If other acquitted felons resemble me, Sir, you have nothing to fear from their hatred, but much perhaps from their honesty; for I hold it to be a duty to inquire into the conduct of all men, but particularly of those who undertake to govern and legislate for the whole world; for whose avaricious grasp three kingdoms were insufficient, whose insatiate ambition the East and the West could not glut, but whose triumphal car Europe and all her tributary states must grace. . . . Should you be fortunate enough to read with temper, however unjust

you may think me for the moment, perhaps you will not read entirely without profit. The soldier who in the heat of battle discovers he has a dangerous wound, if he be not driven quite frantic by the sight of blood, will be desirous of the aid of a surgeon." [1]

Considerable imagination must be employed to grant to this language the attributes which Hazlitt bestowed: "temperate" and "firm." Though some parts of the pamphlet may be examples of simple and unaffected narration, these are only parts; and the more heated portions best illustrate the state of Holcroft's mind at this time. Deeming himself unjustly accused and indicted, denied the privilege of speaking in open court, feeling himself in the possession of evidence that should prove not only his own innocence but the impropriety of the original indictment against him, and having mentioned to many his great desire to speak.[2] He was a sensitive person, who feared the stain of dishonour or disrepute. He frequently rushed forward with an excitable defence however unworthy of notice conversational attacks upon his ideas might be. The spoken word could not avail him. The written word took its place. Believing the press to be the terror of despotism, he dashed madly into print with his Narrative of Facts, unburdening himself there of two undelivered speeches, ostentatious letters from various people of more or less repute, and many solemn remarks on his own straight-

[1] *Letter to William Windham*, pp. 14–15, 17–18.

[2] *Letters of Joseph Ritson*, Jan. 17, 1795. Holcroft was not the only one who resented the use of the phrase, "acquitted felons." See Jeremiah Joyce, *A Sermon Preached on Sunday, Feb.* 23, 1794 (London: 1795), particularly the Appendix.

forward behaviour. If there was too much pride in his character, there was at least much honesty. And he afterwards admitted that sometimes when he tried to preach too much, he was laughed at for his pains. And in the Letter to William Windham his arguments and his methods of presenting them, it seems, would open him much more to the charge of being an Adam Overdo than the mere emphasis on morality of which Ritson disapproved.[1] Far from being "temperate" and "firm" it is more likely to fit a modern description of it as "the most astounding piece of spirited prose in the English language."[2] And there is little to wonder at in the opinions that some held of him probably as also of Thomas Spence, that he might be a fool or a madman whom it would be best to treat with contempt.[3] These two were the only radical pamphlets he published in years when the presses were working overtime to cater to party spirit.]

[1] *Letters of Ritson*, 1 : 63 ; H. A. Burd, *Joseph Ritson*, p. 178.

[2] H. N. Brailsford so characterizes it.

[3] Spence, *Trial of Thomas Spence*, p. 67.

CHAPTER IV

MR. HOLCROFT may be considered from this time as a public character; for the remainder of his life in a great measure received its colour from his conduct on this occasion, and from the opinion and feelings of the public with respect to him. These were of course much divided. That he had been accused of high-treason, was sufficient to draw forth the hatred, execrations, and unqualified abuse of one party; that he was an object of the open and rankling animosity of this party, was in like manner the cause of the favour he received from the violent and vulgar of the opposite party. But there was a third class of persons, inferior in number, as they necessarily would be, of whom Mr. Holcroft might perhaps be considered as the head, namely, those, who being detached either by inclination or situation, from the violence of either party, admired him for the firmness and honesty of his behaviour, and for the bold but benevolent tendency of his principles. His principles, indeed, were of such a kind, that they could not but strike and win upon the admiration of young and ingenuous minds, of those whose hearts are warm, and their imaginations strong and active,

and whose generous and aspiring impulses seem almost to demonstrate the efficacy of disinterested and enlightened motives over the human mind, till it hardened, depressed, distorted from its original direction, and bowed down under the yoke of example and prejudice.[1] In this view of the subject, indeed, we should be tempted to assert, that men do not become what by nature they are meant to be, but what society makes them. The generous feelings, and higher propensities of the soul are, as it were, shrunk up, seared, violently wrenched, and amputated, to fit us for our intercourse with the world, something in the manner that beggars maim and mutilate their children, to make them fit for their future situation in life.

[Most interesting of all are the connections of Holcroft with ardent spirits who had first become acquainted with him through his writings and who desired to meet him, to admire him, and to learn from him. By these men he was perhaps over-appreciated, though some, after they knew him better, liked him less. But among the years of criticism their homage gives a pleasing contrast. The remembrance of Hugh Trevor made Jeffrey "sit down with some eagerness to a book bearing the name of Mr. Holcroft."[2] Crabb Robinson read Anna St. Ives and Hugh Trevor "with avidity,"[3] and expressed admiration for Holcroft's "noble" conduct in surrendering in court. Most significant among the letters written to

[1] This is the whole thesis of Mrs. Inchbald's novel, *Nature and Art*, 1796.

[2] *The Edinburgh Review*, October, 1806, 9 : 101.

[3] *Diary*, 1 : 53.

Holcroft is one from Robert Lovell, though that from Thomas Dermody is the most flattering.]

[*To Mr. Holcroft*

SIR, *December 11th*, 1794.

Were I not writing to Mr. Holcroft, I should think it needful to apologize for my abrupt self-introduction to you in London, and the liberty I now take in addressing you: but I trust you will not deem me impertinent, nor expect any professions to convince you of the esteem and admiration I have for your character. These sentiments induced me to visit you in your late unjust confinement, to be anxious for your safety, and sincerely to rejoice that you are now restored to your friends, and your extensive circle of usefulness. You may perhaps recollect the scheme[1] of which I gave you an imperfect outline; I much desired your opinion and advice on the subject; but your mind being then much engaged on its peculiar situation, I forbore to intrude the subject. Hoping you may now be happily settled at your rightful home, and believing you would be happy to assist me by advice, as well as enforce by precept any virtuous intention, I would engage your thoughts to our projected plan of establishing a genuine system of property. America presents many advantages to the accomplishment of this scheme—the easy rate at which land may be purchased, is not the least important: yet we are not determined on emigration. Principle, not plan, is our object. A friend has suggested that the plan is practicable in some of the uncultivated parts of Wales. I recollect your expressing a desire that we might form such a society without leaving

[1] The Pantisocrasy Scheme.—Hazlitt.

the kingdom. As we wish to consult all who may render our efforts more serviceable to the cause of truth and virtue, we should be happy if in some unemployed hour, you would consider the subject, and impart to us any objection which may occur peculiar to the scheme of emigration. From the writings of William Godwin and yourself, our minds have been illuminated, we wish our actions to be guided by the same superior abilities; perhaps when together, you may bestow some thoughts to our advantage. To him, and your friend Nicholson, I would request the remembrance of an admirer. Long may they continue to instruct and amend mankind! If we could practise our scheme in this kingdom, it would save much expense, perhaps danger, and at the same time be more agreeable to our private inclinations; but the probability of being obnoxious to Government, and subject to tythes, are in our opinions serious objections. I forbear to make any remark on the late trials, or formally to congratulate you on your acquittal. I hope the spirit of enquiry will be excited to advantage; perhaps you would rather have had your trial proceeded in; though the Court authority prevented your *speaking*, they cannot prevent you from *printing* your injured case. I am anxious to see your appeal on the subject.

When you address your charming daughter, (Mrs. *Cole*, of Exeter), whom I saw with you, be good enough to make my remembrance. I wonder not at your drawing the charming character of Anna St. Ives, having so fair an original.

ROBERT LOVELL.[1]

No. 14, *Old Market, Bristol*, 1794.]

[1] This letter has been transposed from its original position in the appendix to the *Memoirs*. Because

[*From Mr. Dermody*

SIR, LONDON, *June 15th*, 1796.

From the universal celebrity of your talents, and the liberal spirit which breathes through all your productions, I am, though a stranger, emboldened to request your superior guidance in the paths of literature. Very little used to authorship as a trade, inexperienced in the polity of book-sellers, and even unacquainted with the city itself, it would, I presume, be no dishonourable employment to direct a wandering muse, and you alone, Sir, are the person I conceive (from general benevolence) best adapted to that task both by affability and experience. Without these two qualifications, you could not have written Alwyn, which, next to Fielding's work, contains the most affecting and sportive scenes that ever adorned that (of which you have given so fine a definition) a novel. I have lately borne a commission in the army, and am, at present, under the patronage of a most learned and amiable nobleman; however, being formerly taught to believe that I had some talents, it is disagreeable to be unemployed with every faculty on the stretch for exertion. By that nobleman's desire, I left a large poem, "The Retrospect," with a printer of eminence in Pall Mall; but was much surprised to be informed yesterday that he had embarked for Italy, and the manuscript was locked up. I have but a very rough draught

Lovell's name, if not his writing, falls within the canon of English literature, we notice that in July, 1795, Holcroft criticized for *The Monthly Review* (17 : 354) the "Poems . . . By Robert Lovell and Robert Southey," finding in them the "vice of despondency" and "a certain woe-begone and debilitating affectation of fine feeling."

of it now till he returns. Your very great dramatic eminence might be of the most material benefit by pointing out the steps proper to be taken in a line of which I have been ever enamoured. If you deign to direct a short reply to this strange intrusion, I shall have the honour to lay a few pieces of poetry (which fortunately are correctly copied) before your judgment—meanwhile

I am, Sir, with great respect,
Your obedient Servant,
THOMAS DERMODY.[1]

No. 30, *Oxendon-Street, Haymarket.*]

[LIEGE, 6 *Xbre l'an Ir de la Republique.*

DEAR HOLCROFT,

I charge my dear friend, the young Mergees, my countermen, to tell you, that I never forgot our old friendship, he'll tell you my profession of faith, upon the Revolution. He'll bring you a relation of the victories of the French, and you'll see my part in it. I have the honour to conduct the liberty lads in the way of the victory.

Adieu, dearer among the dear,
H. DAMPIERRE.
Maj. G. of the French Republic.[2]]

[1] This letter has been transposed from its original position in the *Memoirs.*

[2] The Marquis de Dampierre, with whom I was very intimate at Paris in 1783. He received a mortal wound on the 8th of May, 1793, of which he died on the 10th, when he was Commander in Chief, and which battle the French gained.—T. H.

This letter has been transposed from its original position at the end of the *Memoirs*, 3 : 317–318.

Auguste-Henri-Marie Picot, Marquis de Dampierre

[Godwin's ward, Thomas Apthorp Cooper, was put under the tutelage of Holcroft, who trained him for the stage according to his own ideas, and used his influence to get young Cooper a trial on the boards.[1] A letter from mentor to protégé will illustrate his tone and mannerisms, and deserves quotation, for all its rigour and extravagant preaching, because, as Dunlap remarked, "it was written by as true a friend as ever man had."]

[You do not like the word "lamentation." You will less like the word I am going to use. But before I use it I will most sincerely assure you I mean it kindly. I do not like rhodomontade heroics. They are discordant, grating, and degrading. They are the very reverse of what you imagine them to be. It was not from report, but from your letter itself, that I collected my idea of lamentation and compared to your sufferings, I repeat, Jeremiah never lamented so loudly: at least, such is my opinion, and I hope you do not intend, by a hackneyed and coarse quotation, to deter me from saying that which

(1756–1793), commanded a division at Valmy, and made an enviable reputation at Jemmapes. While Dumouriez was invading Holland, Dampierre was holding up the entire Austrian forces with only 15,000. At the treason of Dumouriez, he remained faithful to the Republic and succeeded to the command of the Army of Belgium (April 4, 1793) and later to that of the Army of the North. He was wounded at Vicoigne and died at Valenciennes. Aulard says all agreed him to be "as brave a soldier as he was an able general."

[1] J. N. Ireland, *Thomas A. Cooper*, No. 5 in Publications of the Dunlap Society; C. K. Paul, *William Godwin*, 1: 151, 153; W. Dunlap, *The American Theatre*, pp. 178–182.

I think may awaken your attention. If you did, it was in a moment of forgetfulness ; for you know that a man of principle ought not to be so deterred. I speak plainly from the very sincere wish, which I so long have cherished, of rousing you at once to the exertions of genius, and the sagacity of benevolence and urbanity. It is to exercise benevolence and urbanity myself, that I am thus intent in wiping from your mind all impressions of supposed rudeness or rigour in thus addressing you.

And now to business : after just reminding you that, though you did not wish me to apply for a London engagement for you, it would have looked quite as friendly had you written to me without this personal motive.

Mr. Wignell, the manager of theatres of Philadelphia, and Baltimore, in America, has applied to me, offering you four, five, and six guineas a week, forty weeks each year, for three succeeding years ; and ensuring benefits to the amount of a hundred and fifty guineas. I have reflected on the subject, and have consulted your other true and tried friend, Mr. Godwin ; and notwithstanding that this offer is so alluring, it is our decided opinion that, were it ten times as great, it ought to be rejected. As an actor, you would be extinct, and the very season of energy and improvement would be for ever passed. I speak of men as they are now constituted ; and after the manner as experience tells me, that their habits become fixed ; ineradicably fixed. Mr. Godwin indeed expresses himself with great force, mixed with some little dread, lest money be a temptation you could not withstand. However, we both knew it to be but right that the decision should be entirely your own ; and therefore send you this information. Be kind enough to return me your

answer; and without regarding my, or any man's opinions, judge for yourself. It is right that Mr. Wignell should not be kept in suspense.

Yours kindly and sincerely,

September 3d, 1796.[1] T. HOLCROFT.

[William Dunlap, manager of the New York Theatre, with whom Holcroft had previously exchanged letters,[2] had the highest admiration for the British radical-dramatist, whose life he said was in itself indication "that man will not ever remain the thing he is." Holcroft himself wrote to Dunlap:]

[DEAR SIR,

I received your last letters dated May and October; as I had done others some months ago, in which you wished me to read your manuscripts. Your friend, Mr. Brewer, offered to put these manuscripts into my hands; this I declined, and I will state my motives.

The reading of manuscripts I have found to be attended with danger. I once read two acts of a manuscript play, and was afterwards accused of having purloined one of the characters. The accusation had some semblance of truth: latent ideas floated in my

[1] Dunlap, *History of the American Theatre*, pp. 180–182, whence the letter has been extracted for this edition, remarks: "But the views of youth are ever widely different from those of age. Cooper chose to embark upon the sea of adventure and the Atlantic, and to try a new scene in a New World." This trip brought fame and fortune to the young actor and insured for Holcroft an international relationship with Dunlap and an American reputation and dramatic vogue.

[2] Dunlap, *American Theatre*, p. 155.

mind, and there were two or three traits in the character drawn by me similar to the one I had read; though I was very unconscious of this when I wrote the character.

A still more potent reason is the improbability of good that is to result from reading manuscripts. To read carefully, examine conscientiously, and detail with perspicuity the errors which the judgment of a critic might think deserving of amendment, is a laborious task: it devours time and fatigues the mind, and but seldom to any good purpose. Books of criticism abound, and may be consulted by an author who is anxious to improve. I grant that the critical remarks of a friend may be of great service. If a man have attained that elegance of diction, depth of penetration, and strength of feeling which constitute genius, to criticise his works before they are presented to the public, may be a useful and a dignified task. Men acquire these high qualities gradually, when compelled by that restless desire which is incessant in its endeavours after excellence; and for these gradations the books already written are, in my opinion, sufficient. Your friend gave me William Tell to read: it proves you have made some progress; but it likewise proves, so far as I am a judge, that much remains for you to accomplish. Common thoughts, common characters, and common sensations have little attraction: we must soar beyond them, or be contented to walk the earth and join the crowd. Far be it from me to discourage the efforts of mind in which I delight: but far be it from me to deceive. If you would attain the high gifts after which you so virtuously aspire, your perseverance must be energetic and unremitting. I consider America as unfavourable to genius: not from any qualities of air, earth, or water: but because the efforts

of mind are neither so great, nor so numerous, or so urgent as in England or France.

You wish for an independence. That man is independent whose mind is prepared to meet all fortunes, and be happy under the worst; who is conscious that industry in any country will supply the very few real wants of his species; and who, while he can enjoy the delicacies of taste as exquisitely as a glutton, can transfer that luxury by the activity of his mind and body to the simplest viands. Every other man is a slave though he were more wealthy than Midas.

I send you my narrative, but am surprised that there should be any difficulty in procuring it at New-York. To a book-seller, the conveyance of such things is familiar and easy; to an individual it has the inconvenience of calling his attention to trifles and disturbing his ordinary progress. I am not certain that the man of literature is not benefited by these little jolts that awaken him, or rather endeavours to awaken: but I know from experience he is very unwilling to notice them, they therefore easily slip his memory. This is the reason I did not send it before as you desired.

With respect to the stage, it is a question which cannot be effectually discussed in a letter: but I have no doubt whatever of its high moral tendency. Neither, in my opinion, was Rousseau right relative to Geneva: for that which is in itself essentially good, will, as I suppose, be good at all times and in all places. T. Holcroft.

London, Newman-street,
December 10th, 1796.[1]]

[1] From Dunlap, *History of the American Theatre*, pp. 159 ff.

The love of truth and virtue which seems at all times natural to liberal-minded youth, was at this time carried to a pitch of enthusiasm, as well by the extraordinary events that had taken place, as by the romantic prospects of ideal excellence which were pictured in the writings of philosophers and poets. A new world was opening to the astonished sight. Scenes, lovely as hope can paint, dawned on the imagination: visions of unsullied bliss lulled the senses, and hid the darkness of surrounding objects, rising in bright succession and endless gradations, like the steps of that ladder which was once set up on the earth, and whose top reached to heaven. Nothing was too mighty for this now-begotten hope: and the path that led to human happiness seemed as plain—as the pictures in the Pilgrim's Progress leading to Paradise. Imagination was unable to keep pace with the gigantic strides of reason, and the strongest faith fell short of the supposed reality. This anticipation of what men were to become, could not but have an influence on what they were. The standard of morality was raised high: and this circumstance must excite an ardent emulation in the minds of many persons to set an example of true and disinterested virtue, unshackled by the prejudices or interests of those around them. The curb of prudence was taken off; nor was it thought that a zeal for what was right could be carried to an excess. There is no doubt that this system would be taken advantage of by the selfish and hypocritical to further their own views at the expense of others:

but it is equally certain that it would add new force to the practice of virtue in the liberal and well-disposed mind.

Kind feelings and generous actions there always have been, and there always will be, while the intercourse of mankind shall endure: but the hope, that such feelings and such actions might become universal, rose and set with the French Revolution. That light seems to have been extinguished for ever in this respect. The French Revolution was the only match that ever took place between philosophy and experience: and waking from the trance of theory to the sense of reality, we hear the words, *truth*, *reason*, *virtue*, *liberty*, with the same indifference or contempt, that the cynic who has married a jilt or a termagant, listens to the rhapsodies of lovers.[1]

[1] The above passage was written in a state of perfect security against the return of that pleasant phrase, *divine right*. Everything is by comparison.—Hazlitt.

CHAPTER V

"LOVE'S FRAILTIES" came out in the beginning of 1794, at Covent-Garden. This play met with indifferent success, of which the principal cause was a supposed allusion to political subjects in some passages. One of these in particular excited the most violent resentment; "A sentence in itself so true," says Mr. Holcroft, "as to have been repeated under a thousand different modes; and under a variety of forms and phraseology, to have been proverbial in all countries." This obnoxious passage was the one, in which Craig Campbell, when insulted by a fashionable coxcomb, who asks what profession he was bred to, says that "he was bred to the most useless, and often the most worthless, of all professions, that of a gentleman." In this comedy, the author has more pointedly than in any other, set up the claims of worth and virtue, against the arrogant assumptions of wealth and rank. That virtue, alone confers true dignity, has however been the common-place theme of teachers of morality and religion, in all ages. But such at this time, was the irritation of party feeling, that to exhibit the force of this trite maxim on the stage, seems to have been regarded as an innovation on common sense, and as big with the seeds of social disorganization.

"The Deserted Daughter," "The Man of Ten Thousand," "The Force of Ridicule," and "Knave or Not," successively appeared in 1795, 1796, 1797, and 1798. The three last of these appeared at Drury-Lane. "The Deserted Daughter," and "He's much to Blame," were acted at Covent-Garden.

Of all these "The Deserted Daughter" was received with the greatest applause, and it is perhaps the best of Mr. Holcroft's serious comedies.[1] The characters of Mordent, of Lady Ann, and particularly of the faithful old servant, Donald, are drawn with great force and feeling. The character of Mordent is that of a philosopher, moralizing on the passions and vices of other men, and hurried away by his own. He has abandoned, or refused to own a daughter, the offspring of a former clandestine marriage, in order to avoid the sneers of the world, and the contempt of the rich and powerful connexions of his second wife. He maintains and brings her up as a natural daughter, but without seeing or acknowledging her. This the girl, who has a high spirit and quick sensibility, resents as an unmerited punishment; and determines either to be suffered to cast herself at her father's feet, and for once receive his blessing, or to throw herself on the mercy of strangers. In consequence of this, she is decoyed into a house of ill fame, by

[1] Played at Covent Garden, 2nd May, 1795, had sixteen performances before the end of the year, benefits later, four editions in the year, and other editions in Ireland and in America.

one of the hoary priestesses of vice, under pretence of affording her employment at her needle; and here she is in danger of falling into the hands of one of Mordent's profligate friends [perhaps even of Mordent himself], who is himself accessory to the plot for carrying her off, at the moment that, by the indefatigable zeal of Donald, who had traced her to this abode of infamy, she is discovered to be his daughter. The scenes which follow this discovery are highly interesting; and through the whole of the character of Mordent, the conflict between a sense of duty, pride, and dissipation, is pourtrayed with strong touches of truth and nature. Cheveril is a lively, amusing character, and represents with a good deal of risible effect, one of those careless, good-natured young fellows, who would be thought "sad wicked dogs," but cannot prevail on themselves to do any harm.

Dorington, "The Man of Ten Thousand," may be considered as a benevolent Timon.[1] After living in the most splendid and profuse hospitality, he suddenly loses his immense wealth, and with it his friends; but he does not at the same time lose either his senses or his philosophy. He preserves in the midst of the most mortifying reverses, the same calm dignity, and evenness

[1] Played at Drury Lane, Jan. 23, 26, 27; Feb. 2, 4, 6, 9, 1796. Holcroft received 33*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* for each of the seven nights (British Museum, *Add. MSS.* 2710, fol. 56b ff., 74b). Wordsworth said, "I have attempted to read Holcroft's *Man of Ten Thousand*, but such stuff." (G. McL. Harper, *Wordsworth*, 1: 289).

of mind. Great as this effort of heroism is, it is managed in such a manner as not to appear unnatural or extravagant. Olivia, his mistress, is by no means so interesting a character. She is the blemish of the piece. Her notions of virtue are too fastidious by half, and she exacts conformity to her standard of perfection, with a dogmatical severity, which would scarcely sit well on a Stoic. Neither is her behaviour explained to Dorington in so satisfactory a manner as it ought to have been. The subordinate characters of Herbert and Annabel are described with extreme tenderness and simplicity. They exhibit an amiable picture of those qualities which often spring directly from a guileless heart, without the artificial refinements of sentiment or reason. Hair-brain is a character of the same school, and must have had a very good effect in the hands of Bannister, who played it. Kemble and Miss Farren [1] were the representatives of Dorington and Olivia.

[This was the first part played by Bannister, as the original, in a piece of this author's. . . . Many passages in his novels and plays, which, only a few years before, would have been derided as puerile or common-place, were now regarded as rancorous, dangerous, deadly effusions, adverse to government and hostile to the state.

These sentiments were at their height when "The

[1] Elizabeth Farren (1759?–1829), actress and, later, Countess of Derby.—W.-G. Cf. Holcroft's poem in *The Universal Magazine*, March, 1787 (80 : 151), quoted in full in the Introduction.

Man of Ten Thousand" appeared. It was coldly received; and although propped by the talents of Kemble, Bannister, Miss Farren, Miss Pope, Mrs. Gibbs, and many more of the first comic actors, it could stand no more than seven nights, and then "fell to cureless ruin." It was given out by the author's friends, that a prejudice against his politics had impeded the success of his play; but no such motive to disregard is wanting. The comedy carries within itself the seeds of its own mortality. It is a mere series of scenes, without plot or contrivance. A false report causes an honourable, high-minded and wealthy man to be suddenly considered as utterly ruined. He bears it like a hero; but a base band of pretended friends, like those of Timon, fly from his distress. The falsehood of the story is discovered, and then they are all eager again to tender their friendship; but they are repulsed with contempt.

Bannister's part was that of a giddy, flighty, light-hearted coxcomb; fool enough to want to squander five hundred pounds, which he can only raise by borrowing, on a share of a quack medicine, of which he knows nothing but from an advertisement: but he is lucky enough, as Fortune favours fools, to gain a twenty-thousand pounds' prize in the lottery; and generous enough, for fools and cox-combs are not always flinty-hearted, to lay it all at the feet of his patron and friend, not knowing that the cloud of his distress was already blown over. Whatever any other person might feel, Bannister had no reason to regret the discontinuance of this play, as the character he had to sustain was every way unworthy of him.[1]]

[1] From *Memoirs of John Bannister, Comedian.* By John Adolphus, Esq., 1: 361–4.

" Knave or Not," as well as " The Man of Ten Thousand," was brought out at Drury-Lane. Its success was not very flattering.[1] The advertisement prefixed by the author to the published play, will explain some of the reasons of this, as well as describe the most striking features of the play itself.

" The unrelenting opposition, which the productions of the author of the present comedy have experienced for several years, is well known to those who pay attention to our public amusements. It is not for him to pronounce how far this opposition has been merited by inability. Since the appearance of the Road to Ruin, his comedy of the Deserted Daughter only has escaped: and then, as he imagines, because it was not known on the first night of its performance, by whom it was written. Love's Frailties, The Man of Ten Thousand, and Knave or Not, have sustained increasing marks of hostility: so that the efforts made to afford rational amusement to the public, emolument to the author, and improvement to morals, have been rendered feeble, and almost ineffectual. In the last instance, one mistake appears to have pervaded the majority of the spectators. It was imagined that the author himself was as unqualified a libeller of mankind as Monrose: in which character the writer's individual sentiments were

[1] Six nights: Jan. 25, 26, 27, 31; Feb. 1, 6, 1798. The stupendous success of *The Stranger* and *The Castle Spectre* eclipsed it (British Museum, *Add. MSS.*, 29,710).

supposed to have been incorporated. Those who have read his other works cannot surely attribute to him any such indiscriminate misanthropy. The accusation that has been most generally made against him is, that he thinks men capable of gradations of virtue, which others affirm they can never attain. Persons, who have made the human mind their study, have discovered that guilty men exert the whole force of their faculties to justify their own course of action to themselves. To this principle the writer was strictly attentive in portraying the character of Monrose. His design was to draw a man of genius, misled by his passions, reasoning on his actions, systematising them, condemning them in principle, but justifying them in practice, and heating his imagination by contemplating the crimes of others; that he might still retain that respect for himself, of which the strongest minds, even in the last stages of vice, are so tenacious. How far the spirit of faction, commotion, and anarchy, of which the author has long been, and is still, so vehemently accused, is to be traced in the present comedy, may now be seen. Sincerely desirous of giving no offence, the passages which were most disapproved, or to speak more accurately, reprobated, on the first night, have since been omitted in representation; but they are printed between inverted commas, that the cool judgment may decide whether the author could have been so insane as actually to intend to inflame the spectators, and increase a spirit of enmity between men of different sentiments:

whom could he reconcile, he would account it the most heart-consoling action of his life.

"Before the comedy appeared, all parties were anxious that no sentence or word should be spoken, which could be liable to misrepresentation. Some few passages, therefore, are committed to the press, which never were spoken on the stage; particularly the passage, where Monrose inquires into his qualifications for being a lord. A few years ago, this would have been common-place satire; and it is a subject of no little regret, that at present local and temporary applications are so liable to be made where none are intended."[1]

The jealousy which was thus manifested of sentiments, either of liberty or public virtue, was perhaps as inconsiderate as it was unjust. When the tragedy of Cato was first played, at a time when party zeal ran high, the Whigs applauded all the strong passages in the play, as a satire on the Tories; and the Tories were as loud in their applause as the Whigs, to shew that the satire was unfelt. But the "horrors" of the French Revolution were, it seems, to become a Medusa's shield to screen every species of existing vice or folly from the glance even of ridicule, and to render them invulnerable and incorrigible. To stickle obstinately for the abuses to which any system is liable is tacitly to identify the system with the abuse.

[1] For further discussion of this point see my Bibliography, entry under 1790, *The German Hotel.*

In the characters of Susan and Jonas in this play, Mr. Holcroft has been guilty of that common vice among the authors of the present day, of trusting less to the characters themselves, than to the persons who were to act them. They are well adapted to shew the powers of acting in Mrs. Jordan, and Bannister, who might probably make them amusing or interesting; but they certainly stand in need of this foreign aid to produce such an effect.

[Knave or Not . . . in which Bannister performed (25th January, 1798) the part of Jonas, was little recommended by felicity of invention, probability in conduct, or vivacity in dialogue. Had the comedy been fortunate, Jonas would have added not a leaf to the laurels of the performer. He has no more sense than Squire Richard, in the Provoked Husband; but is not without the virtue of good-nature, and is spoiled by a foolish and wicked mother. His oppressed and neglected brother sums up his character in a short sentence: "He has the caprice and obstinacy of a pampered son, but his heart is open and kind."

At the period when this piece was produced, Holcroft was regarded with suspicion and dislike by many, as a supposed member of a faction which was labouring by insidious, as well as by direct means, to overthrow the government and religion of the country. He had been included in the same indictment with Hardy, Horne Tooke, and Thelwall; voluntarily surrendered himself to meet a trial; but was discharged, because the advisers of government, after three acquittals, considered further prosecution useless. After his liberation, he made vigor-

ous attacks on the proceedings of the ministry and their friends, in pamphlets and in novels ; and it was supposed that he would not be more forbearing in his dramas.

In Knave or Not, Monrose, his principal personage, was calculated to give force to the suspicions which were entertained. A few of his earliest speeches not only showed his character, but seemed to indicate the intent of the piece. He tells his sister, an honest and virtuous country girl, of his intention to make her fortune and his own.

" Not by becoming a wicked cheat," she says. " No, Harry ; that's not the way."

" You mistake," he answers ; " that is the only way, 'tis the common calling ! Fur gowns, gold chains, and white wands, are its rewards. From high to low 'tis all bargain and sale. And what is bargain and sale ? Why, to display the good side and conceal the bad ; that is, to cheat and lie ! Fools and knaves are the two grand classes ; for the honest men are too insignificant, and too few, to form a class. Poverty and disgrace are got by keeping them company ; and he that would thrive must shun them as he would the plague."

This, and much more of the same kind, would have passed some years before as mere common-place, or as the ravings of a moody misanthrope ; but in the existing state of politics, and from such a writer, every unfavourable conclusion was adopted. The author, and some portion of the public, believed that political feeling alone caused the bad success of the play ; and it has been well observed, that there certainly were some abstract passages of rather a suspicious nature which provoked the censure of the audience : but, if the dramatic merit of the piece had been at all obvious, it would have overcome and

survived this opposition. The absurdity of the plot, its utter destitution of interest, the undramatic manner in which it was developed, the insignificance of the characters, their want of originality, the impotency of the humour, and, in short, the awkwardness with which the whole was conducted, must have sealed its fate, had the design been of the most inoffensive or even of the most commendable nature. From this general censure, however, must be excepted the language, which was for the most part constructed with great elegance, and united strength of thought with purity of phrase. Before the second representation, Mr. Wroughton read a paper, drawn up by the author, in which he disclaimed having had any party views, and solicited a patient hearing. This request was granted, and the play went on without interruption ; but it only lived four or five nights.[1]]

" He's much to Blame " was acted at Covent-Garden in 1798, with great and deserved success. It is a truly elegant comedy. The characters, particularly that of Sir George Versatile, are amusing and original ; and the situations, which arise in the progress of the story, give birth to some of the most natural and delicate strokes of passion. The scene at the masquerade, where Maria is discovered by Sir George, is perhaps the most striking ; the unaffected and artless expression of her feelings produces an effect which is irresistible. The easiness of Sir George's temper, and the facility with which he accommodates himself to other people's humours, without any

[1] From *Memoirs of John Bannister, Comedian.* By John Adolphus, Esq., 2 : 16–19.

"HE'S MUCH TO BLAME"

Facsimile of the opening pages of William Dunlap's "Prompt Copy" of the First Edition 1798 with manuscript directions

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Lord Vibrate,	Mr. Quick.
Sir George Verſatile,	Mr. Lewis.
Mr. Delaval,	Mr. Pope.
Dr. Goſterman,	Mr. Murray.
Thompſon,	Mr. Davenport.
Williams,	Mr. Clarke.
Harry,	Mr. Abbot.
Maſter of the Hotel,	Mr. Thompſon.
Jenkins,	Mr. Rees.
Waiter,	Mr. Blurton.
Footman,	Mr. Curtis.

Lady Vibrate,	Mrs. Mattocks.
Lady Jane,	Miſs Betterton.
Maria,	Mrs. Pope.
Lucy,	Mrs. Gibbs.
Lady Jane's woman,	Mrs. Norton.

Prompt book Wm Dunlap

HE'S MUCH TO BLAME,

A COMEDY.

Breakfast Ready

(Bell Ready RH)

ACT I.

SCENE I.—{Ringing heard. RH} {The hall of a hotel, with a spacious stair-case. PS.}

Enter the MASTER, PS *and* HEAD WAITER *meeting.*

MASTER,

WHY where are all the fellows, Jenkins? Don't you hear the bell No. 9?

JENK. Tom is gone up to answer it, sir.

MAS. Who occupies that apartment?

JENK. The handsome youth and girl, that arrived late last night.

MAS. Just as I was going to bed?

JENK. Yes, sir.

MAS. He is quite a boy.

JENK. Razor has never robbed him of a hair.

MAS. Some stripling, perhaps, that has run away with his mother's maid.

JENK. They ordered separate beds.

MAS. Well, see what they want.

JENK. Yes, sir.

MAS. And, harkye, be attentive the moment you hear Lord and Lady Vibrate, or their daughter, stirring.

design or hypocrisy, are admirably described. The passions are less strongly moved in this comedy than in the Deserted Daughter, but they are moved with less effort, and with more pleasure to the reader. Neither has it any thing like the same bustle and broad effect as the Road to Ruin: but in ease, lightness, and a certain graceful simplicity, neither sinking into insipidity on the one hand, nor "o'erstepping the modesty of nature" on the other, it is superior to almost every other modern production. It is the finest specimen Mr. Holcroft has left of his powers for writing what is commonly understood by *genteel comedy*.

The comedy of "He's much to Blame" was offered to the theatre in the name of a friend; an artifice to which the author, notwithstanding his dislike to every species of insincerity, was obliged to resort more than once.

He informs us in a short advertisement that he was indebted for some hints in this play to *Le Complaisant*, a French Comedy, and the Clavigo of Goethe.

"The Inquisitor," brought out soon after at the Haymarket, and "The Old Clothesman," an afterpiece,[1] at Covent-Garden, were unsuccessful.

[1] Music by Thomas Atwood, 1765–1833.—W.-G.

CHAPTER VI

HAVING brought Mr. Holcroft's literary history down to the time when he left England, I shall throw together, in the present chapter, such private incidents as occurred within this period, and as have not been already noticed.

After the appearance of the comedy of Duplicity, in 1782, Mr. Holcroft left his house, in Southampton Buildings, and went to live in Mary-le-bone Street. He afterwards hired a house, for a short time, in Margaret-Street, in conjunction with his friend, Bonneville. In 1789, or the beginning of 1790, he removed into Newman-Street, where he continued till a short time before his going abroad, in 1799, when he took lodgings in Beaumont-Street, near the New Road.

In the year 1786, Mr. Holcroft first became acquainted with Mr. Godwin. This friendship lasted for near twenty years. It was broken off by an unhappy misunderstanding, some time after Mr. Holcroft's return from the continent; and they did not see each other, in consequence of the coolness that took place, till they met for the last time a little before Mr. Holcroft's death.

It was Mr. Holcroft who reviewed Mr.

Godwin's celebrated work on Political Justice, in the Monthly Review, 1793. It may be supposed that the Review was a favourable one. Mr. Holcroft at this time constantly wrote articles in the Monthly Review, and was on friendly terms with Griffiths, the proprietor.[1] But it seems the latter was considerably alarmed at the boldness of some of Mr. Godwin's principles, and still more staggered at the accounts he had heard of them. He threw himself on Mr. Holcroft's known attachment to the interest of the Review not to commit its character by undeserved praise. Griffiths, however, probably found soon after that the *common place* character of the Review had been endangered; and the first opportunity was seized to retrieve the mistake, by retracting their opinion *hautement* in the Review of Mr. Malthus's publication.

The marriage of Mr. Holcroft's eldest daughter with Colonel Harwood[2] took place in the year 1796.

Immediately after his release from prison, in 1794, he hurried into Devonshire to see his daughter (Sophy), whom he believed to be dying. His apprehensions, however, were groundless. While he remained in the country he had a fall from a tree,[3] which had nearly proved fatal to

[1] Cf. Bibliography.

[2] Col. Harwood, nephew of William Tooke, Horne Tooke's friend.—W.-G. He also was a member of the Society for Constitutional Information.

[3] A letter from him to Godwin, dated 22 July, 1795 (C. K. Paul, *William Godwin*, 1: 149), recounts this

him, and brought on an occasional palpitation of the heart ; to which he was ever after subject, on using any sudden or violent exertion.

[" I fell from a slip ladder," says Holcroft, " and broke it fairly in two. I endeavoured to overcome the extreme pain, but at last was obliged, partly by entreaty and partly by precaution, to send for a village surgeon. I lay with my joints burning and my muscles cramped and twisted, during which I had full leisure for the display of my system of resistance to pain[1] ; I persuaded myself,

incident in detail : from which recital the inserted passages are taken. Frances Anne Kemble, *Records of a Girlhood*, 3 : 117, gives the story in a garbled version.

[1] Just after Holcroft had been reading Dugald Stewart's *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, of which he wrote in *The Monthly Review*, January, 1793 (10 : 59) : " Of all the subjects which present themselves to the consideration of man, that of MIND, its laws, powers, and progress, is the most extensive, the most interesting, and the most sublime." Holcroft had dinner at Turnham Green with Ralph Griffiths and walked back to town with Thomas Ogle. Ogle wrote to Griffiths, as quoted in my Introduction, all the conversation in which Holcroft developed " a few of the arcana of his system." According to this account, Mind was the basis of all things. Mind could do everything. Mind produced fatigue. Mind produced walking. Mind produced all diseases of the body and can cure them all, physic and drugs being only covers for ignorance. Mind could cure cancer. Mind could even cure structural changes in the body. And in spite of all this argument, after walking too briskly, Holcroft had to show symptoms of pain due to a swelling on his collar bone (cf. " anatomical inspection " at the end of these *Memoirs*).

in spite of my tormentors, that my system was true. It induced me to laugh and joke, and exercise my little wits on all that came within my sphere of action."]

Mr. Holcroft had, some years before, shortly after the appearance of the Road to Ruin, been attacked by a paralytic affection, which he believed to have been the effect of too severe and constant application. Indeed, when we recollect the number and variety of Mr. Holcroft's productions, it is evident that either his facility or industry must have been wonderful. Perhaps there is no instance of a man, who has passed through so much literary drudgery in voluminous translations, &c., and who was at the same time continually employed in the most lively efforts of the imagination. His resolute perseverance in pursuits so opposite, and apparently incompatible with each other is a proof both of the activity and steadiness of his mind.

The relaxations in which Mr. Holcroft indulged, were few and regular. He was fond of riding; and, for some years, kept a horse, which had generally high blood in its veins. In 1787, he bought a poney of his father, which he valued so highly, that he refused to part with it for forty guineas. The French are not great equestrians; and Mr. Holcroft one day amused himself rather maliciously, in making a friend from Paris mount this poney, who was extremely alarmed at the tricks he began to play, though he was really in no danger.

Mr. Holcroft also belonged to a musical club,

of which Shield, Villeneux, Crompton, Clementi, and Solomon, were members. From this he afterwards withdrew on account of the expense attending it.

His love for the arts sometimes subjected him to temptations which were not consistent with strict economy. He once gave a considerable sum of money for a couple of Cremona fiddles at a sale; one of which he afterwards presented to his friend Shield.

It may be supposed that that part of Mr. Holcroft's time which he could spare from his studies, was chiefly devoted to the society of literary friends. He, however, gave few dinner-parties, and those were not ostentatious, and consequently not expensive. When a friend dined with him, a bottle of wine was usually produced after dinner; but with respect to himself, he was extremely abstemious in the use of liquor, and the habits of his friends were rather those of philosophers than Bacchanalians. A little story, which the mention of this subject has brought to my recollection, paints the characteristic simplicity of Mr. Holcroft's father in an amusing light. Shortly after Mr. Godwin's first acquaintance with Holcroft, he was invited to dine with him one day, when the old gentleman was on a visit to his son. After dinner Mr. Holcroft happened to go out of the room; and during his absence, Mr. Godwin helped himself to a glass of wine. This was remarked as a flagrant breach of the rights of hospitality by the old man, and he took the first opportunity

to caution his son against Mr. Godwin "as a very bad man; for that while he was out of the room, he, Mr. Godwin, had taken the bottle, and without saying any thing, poured himself out a glass of wine."—This laughable discovery would hardly have been made, if considerable care and economy had not generally characterised Mr. Holcroft's table. He seems indeed to have observed through his whole life, the greatest moderation, even to a degree of parsimony, in his mode of living. The only extravagance with which he could reproach himself was in the occasional gratification of that inordinate love which he had for every thing connected with learning, or the fine arts. A fine-toned instrument, a curious book, or a masterly picture, were the baits which luxury always held out to him, and to which he sometimes imprudently yielded.[1] He once bought a complete set of the *Fratres Poloni*,[2] though he did not understand the language in which they wrote. Books and pictures were his chief articles of expense: the former he might think necessary to his own pursuits as an author; and the latter he looked upon as a lucrative speculation; for it is not to be supposed that he often bought pictures unless he considered them as a bargain. The worst of it was, that the ardour of his mind for whatever he engaged in, and that confidence in

[1] The sale catalogues of his books show a very large collection indeed. Cf. Bibliography.

[2] Polonorum Fratrum Bibliotheca quos Unitarios vocant, etc., 1656, 5 vols. folio.—W.-G.

his own judgment, which is common to men of strong feelings and active minds, too frequently deceived him. Among the purchases which Mr. Holcroft at this time made, was one which he supposed to be the original picture of Sion House, painted by Wilson.[1] He was eager to show this prize to his friends; and to one in particular, who expressed some doubt of its genuineness. To this Mr. Holcroft replied, by pointing to a touch in one part of the picture, which he said no copyist could imitate. A few days after, however, he came to the same friend, and told him that he had been right in his conjecture, for that he had now got the real original, and that the other was but a copy. He afterwards sold the copy to Bannister for five guineas. The second purchase was a real Wilson, and one of the finest landscapes he ever painted.

Mr. Holcroft occasionally made excursions into different parts of England, and once or twice went to see his father, who seldom remained long in the same place. In 1788 he made a journey of this kind to visit him at Haslington in Cheshire. Of the particulars of this journey Mr. Holcroft has left an amusing sketch in a memorandum-book, which I shall here transcribe.

"May 24th, 1788. Received a letter from my father, alarmed, supposed him dying. Went

[1] "A view of Sion House, from Richmond Gardens" (1776), by Richard Wilson (1714–1783), one of the greatest of English landscape painters.—W.-G.

immediately to take coach. Set out on the 25th, in the Manchester Commercial Coach for Haslington. An ignorant Cambridge scholar, a boorish country attorney, a pert travelled officer, a vain, avaricious, rheumatic old woman, and a loving young widow. Dined at Holkliff in company with outside passangers. Pride of inside ones. Tea at Chapel Brompton. A sandwich at Lutterworth. Widow leaves the coach. Quaker taken up at Hinckliff, but four and twenty, conceived himself a wit, rude to the old woman. Breakfast at Litchfield. Resign my place to a distressed damsel, and ride outside to Stafford. Cankwood coal-pits. Village of Slade. Remembrance of former times, youthful distresses, ass and coals blown down, white bread of Rugely, pottery journeys, &c. Pleasant banks of the Trent. Various seats, parks, pleasure-grounds, &c. Quaker takes his glass at Stafford, becomes more talkative and rude, which he supposes witty. Is told he is carnally inclined, and becomes suddenly abashed. Such is the force of habit and education. Lose the lawyer, dine at Newcastle. Quaker listens to learned poetical discourse on unities, Shakespeare, Moliere, Boileau, Pope, Gresset, Rousseau, Voltaire, Milton, &c., in raptures. Old woman displays her whole stock of great discernment, *i.e.*, vanity. Stop at Talk. Waggon blown up: concussion felt several miles. Ostler of Talk o' the Hill going to see his sweetheart, drove down the hill for the waggoner: smith at work saw the gunpowder running out, and called to lock the

wheel, or the waggon would be blown up. Was not heard, or it was impossible to stop the waggon. Horse's shoe supposed to have struck fire, and caught the train. Body of the ostler dismembered, and blown with one of the horses through the wall of a house ; his leg and arm found some days after under the rubbish of a blown-down wall. All the horses killed. Many women and children killed, others maimed—the glass of the windows shivered into their faces and breasts—their shrieks terrible. Deep sands of Cheshire. New-built village of Wheelock, between Haslington and Sandbach. Joy at finding my father in no danger. Simple hospitality of farmer Owen. News of my arrival spread through the village. Bashful, boorish curiosity. Village scandal. Informed of the character of each individual ; one accused of pride, another of selfishness, drunkenness, &c. A brutal broken butcher, who had spent a good fortune, the pest and terror of the place. Runs naked at prison-bars in Crewe Park, is horse-whipped by the Squire's order. Informs against his brother Fox and farmer Owen ; confuted, and punished for having killed hares himself, though unable to substantiate his own charge. Maims cattle, &c. Is the terror of my father. Tricks of my father's landlord. Promises portions with his daughters, and when married, tells the husbands he will pay them the interest. Clerk of the parish, the barber, cobbler, ostler, and musician of the village. Lady's maid returned from her travels, visits the village and her friends, speaks gibberish,

is reported to understand language better than myself. Psalm-singing vanity of the clerk humbled. Village ideas of London. Cheshire dairies. Excursion to Crewe Cottage. Poetic ideas. Returned to write down some lines, nearly extempore. Crewe and Sheridan. The first a great man among the neighbouring boors, and his own footmen; the latter in the House of Commons, among the first men in the nation, or in the world. Welch manners. Red woollen shirts. Sunday mirth. The women till the earth, the men sit and smoke. Goat's milk rich. Went to Nantwich. Inscription on a house curiously built. 'Thomas Clease made this house in the XVIII yeare of the reane of our noble Queene Elezabeth.' Thomas Holcroft, a white-cooper at Boscow, near Ormskirk. Richard Fairhurst, farmer in the same neighbourhood, my father's first cousin. Dobson, his uncle. My father born on Martin's Muir, removed to Sheepcote hills, went to school at Rudderford."

Mr. Holcroft's father lived in the latter part of his life near Knutsford, where he had married again. Mr. Holcroft allowed him 20*l. per annum*, which, with a little shop and garden that he kept, maintained him comfortably. He allowed 12*l.* a year to his widow after his death, which happened in 1797. A tomb-stone was erected to his memory by his son's desire, with the following inscription: "Here lies the body of Thomas Holcroft, who departed this life—1797, aged 80. He was a careful father, a kind husband,

and an honest man." He was buried in Peavor church-yard, near Knutsford.[1]

Mr. Holcroft's affairs soon after became considerably involved, partly through the failure of the polygraphic scheme in which he had foolishly embarked several hundred pounds, but chiefly from a run of ill fortune at the theatre. He was obliged to sell his effects, books, and pictures. These it may be supposed did not fetch near their value; and the parting with the two last, particularly his books, Mr. Holcroft felt almost as the severing of a limb from the body. His plan was to retire to the Continent, both for the sake of economy, and with a view to establish a literary correspondence, and send over translations of such works as it might be advantageous either to the theatres or the booksellers to accept. Mr. Holcroft left England for Hamburgh in May, 1799. Whether it was just that a man who had unremittingly devoted his whole life to literary and philosophical pursuits, who had contributed highly to the public amusement, who had never entered into the intrigues or violent feelings of any party, and whose principles necessarily rendered him an inoffensive and peaceable member of society, whose end was the good of mankind, and whose only weapon for promoting it was reason; whether it was just that such a man should become the victim of

[1] The register in the Lower Peavor Vicarage, Knutsford, contains the following entry under the year 1797: "Burials, 1797. March 11th. Thos. Holcroft of Knutsford."

political prejudice, and because he had been once made the subject of a false accusation, should be exposed to unrelenting persecution afterwards from those who seemed to think that unprovoked injury could only be expiated by repeated insult, is a question which may at least admit of doubt in the minds of most thinking persons.

Before Mr. Holcroft left England, he married Louisa, the daughter of his friend Mercier. Of his marriage with this lady it is needless to say more at present, than that Mr. Holcroft found all that happiness in it which he had promised himself from a union with a young, sensible, accomplished, and affectionate wife.

BOOK V

DIARY

CHAPTER I [1]

OF that part of our author's life, which includes the last two years he spent in England before his going abroad, I am enabled to give the reader a more satisfactory account from his own papers. During almost the whole of this time, he kept a diary, and though this diary is not filled with great events, or striking reverses of fortune, it exhibits a perfect picture of the life, habits, and amusements of a literary man. It is my wish to bring the reader as nearly acquainted as I can with the subject of these memoirs; and I know no better way of doing this, than by exhibiting in his own words almost every thought or circumstance which passed through his mind during the above period. From hence we may form some notion of the rest. This diary will occupy a very disproportionate space to the rest of the work; but if it should be found tedious, I shall have erred grievously in judgment. There are some personalities in the original which are omitted; and others which may still be thought

[1] This was originally designated as Chapter VII of the previous book, but it has seemed advisable to join it to the rest of the diary as Chapter I of a new book.

improper. But I believe no greater liberties are taken with the names of living characters, than are to be found in Boswell's Life of Johnson, and other sources of literary anecdote.

Mr. Holcroft began his Diary in June, 1798.—It is as follows :

"I have long felt a desire to keep memorandums of the common occurrences of life, and have now made a determination which I think will not easily be shaken, to keep a

DIARY, 1798.

June, 22*nd*.—Called on Mr. Armstrong, relative to my disease; advises me to take oil of almonds, and rhubarb. Called on Mr. Shield, saw him—On Mr. and Mrs. Opie,[1] both ill.—Wrote to Mr. Reynolds,[2] bookseller, to settle the account—Wrote to Mr. Colman, who called when I was out.—Went to Debrett's[3]; the opinion of Mr. Weld is, that the force sent over by government will be sufficient to quell the

[1] John Opie (1761–1807), historical painter. He painted three portraits of Holcroft. Cf. Earland, *John Opie and his Circle*, and J. J. Rogers, *John Opie and his Works*, pp. 110–111.

[2] Of Shepperson and Reynolds, who published *Hugh Trevor* (1794–97).

[3] John Debrett, bookseller, had published *The Road to Ruin*. His shop in Piccadilly, opposite Burlington House, was a Whig resort. S. W. Ryley, *The Itinerant*, Vol. V, p. 66, speaks of bids for patronage through "vain attendance at a proud bookseller's levee."

Irish insurrection for the present: believes Dundas averse to the coercion used in that country, and to the Beresfords, &c. R. Ad*air*[1] says Windham, out of the house rails at the Irish system, that Lord Fitz*william*,[2] the D*uke of* D*evonshire*, &c.,[3] are averse to it; that the D*uke* of P*ortland*[4] is for it, as well as that part of the cabinet, called the King's friends. Professor Porson[5] dined with me: made as usual numerous amusing quotations, and among the rest cited the following passage from Middleton's preface,[6] as one of the most manly, beautiful, and full of genius that he had ever read. "I persuade myself that the life and faculties of man, at the best but short and limited, cannot be employed more rationally or laudably than in the search of knowledge; and especially of that sort which relates to our duty, and conduces to our happiness. In these inquiries, therefore, wherever I perceive any glimmering

[1] Sir Robert Adair (1763–1855), the friend of Charles James Fox.—W.-G.

[2] William Wentworth, 2nd Earl Fitzwilliam (1748–1833).—W.-G.

[3] Filled in at the suggestion of Mr. Horace Bleackley.

[4] William Henry Cavendish Bentinck (1738–1809).—W.-G.

[5] Richard Porson (1759–1808), Greek scholar and critic.—W.-G.

[6] Conyers Middleton's (1683–1750) *History of the Life of M. Tullius Cicero* (1741). A book which enjoyed a great reputation, and which reached a fourth edition in 1750.—W.-G.

of truth before me, I readily pursue and endeavour to trace it to its source, without any reserve or caution of pushing the discovery too far, or opening too great a glare of it to the public. I look upon the discovery of any thing which is true, as a valuable acquisition to society; which cannot possibly hurt or obstruct the good effect of any other truth whatsoever; for they all partake of one common essence, and necessarily coincide with each other; and like the drops of rain, which fall separately into the river, mix themselves at once with the stream, and strengthen the general current."—It is indeed a noble and admirable passage.—Porson maintained that women are by nature and of necessity inferior to men; and that whipping is beneficial to youth: on both which points, I to a very considerable degree, differed with him—But we rather declared an opinion, than argued a question. Having drunk about a pint of wine, he refused any more; which determination I was pleased to see. Mentioned the letters to Travis,[1] and the orgies of Bacchus. Quoted Foote (Smirk in the Minor) and spoke of him, as he well deserves, with rapture—Went in the evening to the billiard table, but did not play. I go for exercise, because I find that

[1] *Letters to Mr. Archdeacon Travis* (George, 1741–1798) *in answer to his Defence of three heavenly witnesses* (John v. 7), published by Porson in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1788–89, and in a volume in 1790; described by Gibbon as "the most acute and accurate piece of criticism since the days of Bentley."—W.-G.

walking without a motive wearies, not recruits the spirits: but my rule is never to play for more than a shilling, and never to bet, as I hold gaming to be a detestable vice. I am obliged to play for something in compliance with the custom. Returned and read a few pages of Pennant's tour in Scotland,[1] which I began this day.

23rd.—Wrote a scene in "Old Clothesman"; walked to see Mr. Godwin; conversed of my disease; he wished me to consult Carlisle [2]—Returned; wrote a letter to Mrs. Jordan, in behalf of Mr. Watts—Conversed with Mr. Webb at Debrett's, on the moral progress of mankind—Returned and saw Mr. Colman, from whom I now first learnt that the prologue and epilogue to the Inquisitor, advertised without my knowledge, and to be played this very night, were written by the prompter, Mr. Waldron [3]—Accompanied Fanny two lessons, and went to billiards, played about a dozen games; felt internal pains that warned me; felt my pulse, and found it extremely quick; left off immediately, applied my thoughts to calm the arterial

[1] Thomas Pennant's (1726–1798) *Tours in Scotland* were published in 1771–75. "He's a *Whig*, Sir; *a sad dog* . . . but he's the best traveller I ever read."—Johnson. See Boswell's Life (ed. G. B. Hill), III. 274.—W.-G.

[2] Sir Anthony Carlisle (1768–1840), comparative anatomist who was associated in 1800 with Holcroft's friend Nicholson in his electrical researches.—W.-G. Probably consulted concerning the ailments.

[3] Playwright and actor: F. G. Waldron (1744–1818).

action, walked gently home; giddy, and considerably affected: took medicine, and went to bed. Soon after received accounts, that the Inquisitor was in part highly disapproved of, and ridiculed. Mr.——[1] was of opinion that the story, notwithstanding, made a considerable impression upon the audience, which he considered as an impartial one; and that, on the whole, the feelings of the people were more for than against the play. In the course of the day, read more of Pennant; the facts he collects are useful, and some of them curious; but his manner is disjointed, confused, and therefore dull.

24th.—Worked about an hour at my opera (Old Clothesman)—Read Pennant—Went to Colman, who seems fearful I should wish him to play the Inquisitor to his own disadvantage. Agreed to omit certain passages the next night: when he first read the play, his opinion was warmly in its favor, he then thought it perfectly safe. The ludicrous reception it met with from the audience has changed his opinion. I have found the same effect produced on others, on various occasions. My opinion is, that it was not the play which occasioned the laughter, but the manner of performing it, aided by the gratification which the flippancy of criticism

[1] The man who had been to see the Inquisitor, but might possibly have been a professional. He went to the same play more than once if he is the same as the Mr. S—— on pp. 129–30. But I think it likely that these were two different people.

finds in flattering its own discrimination and superiority. The play will be printed with the passages retained (except one, which is trifling) that the reader of it may judge how far it was in itself calculated to produce, or to deserve laughter. Our theatres at present, (and from its smallness this theatre in particular) are half filled with prostitutes and their paramours: they disturb the rest of the audience; and the author and common sense, are the sport of their caprice and profligacy. Met Perry[1] for the first time since his release from Newgate; then Dr. Moore, who shewed me the list of the special jury, summoned to try Cuthell, or Johnson, for publishing Wakefield's[2] pamphlet.—Dined, Godwin and Reece present.[3] Godwin mentioned a Mr.—— whom he and Mr. Fawcett,[4] on a pedestrian

[1] See note Vol. I, p. 207. Perry was sent to Newgate by the House of Lords, 22nd March 1798, for three months, and fined £50, for a "libel" on that assembly.—W.-G.

[2] Gilbert Wakefield, churchman and friend of Horne Tooke; he was a well-educated man with an interesting career as a reform pamphlet writer, growing more radical each year.

[3] "London Library" copy. Richard Reece (1775–1831), member of the Royal College of Surgeons (1796), who was given the silver medal of the Royal Humane Society in 1799.

[4] The late Rev. Joseph Fawcett, author of *The Art of War*, &c. It was he who delivered the Sunday evening lectures at the Old Jewry, which were so popular about twenty years ago. He afterwards retired to Hedgegrove

ramble, went to visit at Ipswich: Godwin saying, that perhaps he would give them beds; if not, he would ask them to supper, and besides they should have the pleasure of seeing the beautiful Cicely, his daughter. They went, stayed some time, but received no invitation. When they came away, Mr. Fawcett said he had three questions to ask Mr. Godwin—How he liked his supper, how he liked his bed, and how he liked Miss Cicely, (who had not appeared)? This occasioned me to remark, that the fault was probably not in the host, but in the hypocrisy of our manners; and that they ought to have

in Hertfordshire. It was here that I first became acquainted with him, and passed some of the pleasantest days of my life. He was the friend of my early youth. He was the first person of literary eminence, whom I had then known; and the conversations I had with him on subjects of taste and philosophy (for his taste was as refined as his powers of reasoning were profound and subtle) gave me a delight, such as I can never feel again.

The writings of Sterne, Fielding, Cervantes, Richardson, Rousseau, Godwin, Goethe, &c. were the usual subjects of our discourse, and the pleasure I had had, in reading these authors, seemed more than doubled. Of all the persons I have ever known, he was the most perfectly free from every taint of jealousy or narrowness. Never did a mean or sinister motive come near his heart. He was one of the most enthusiastic admirers of the French Revolution; and I believe that the disappointment of the hopes he had cherished of the freedom and happiness of mankind, preyed upon his mind, and hastened his death.—Hazlitt.

freely said they wanted a supper, beds, and to see Miss Cicely. Spoke to Mr. R*ee*ce on the morality of eating animal food: he said we had no right to kill animals, and diminish the quantity of sensation. I answered that the quantity of sensation was greatly increased; for that the number of living animals was increased, perhaps ten, perhaps a hundred fold, by the care which man bestowed on them; and that as I saw no reason to suppose they meditated on, or had any fore-knowledge of death, the pain of dying to them is scarcely worth mentioning. I ought however to have added, that the habit of putting them to death, probably injures that class of men (butchers whose office it is), and that they communicate the injury in part to society. This evil I think might be greatly remedied. Ritson joined our party in the evening.

25th.—Took my medicine as usual. Sent orders to Marshall, and others. Read the papers at Debrett's: they were uniform in decrying the Inquisitor. One critic, whom I believe to be a man of taste and candor, accused it of fustian, and various other vile defects.—Went to Tattersall's—the usual group there of horse-dealers, jockeys, and gentlemen: played three games at billiards, in Sharrard-Street—Saw Mr. S*toddart*,[1]

[1] I accept the "London Library" emendation: Stoddart. There is another S—— at p. 139, and still another at p. 140, said to be a Scotchman. At p. 242, read part of one of his comedies to S——. The only other uses of this initial are "S—— the surgeon" at p. 215, which I

who thought but indifferently of the Inquisitor; alleging, however, that he could not hear, &c.—Went to Colman at the theatre, the Inquisitor then performing to the satisfaction of the audience; he therefore agreed to play it the next night; but was anxious, if the house was thin, that it should be laid aside. We agreed to wait the event, and confer on Wednesday. Returned. Mr. S*toddart* came to me from the play-house, to inform me, that the piece had on this second performance, been well received; that the actors, who played vilely the first night, were greatly improved, and that his opinion of it was very much changed.

26th.—Went to Paternoster-Row; conferred with Robinson[1] on publishing the Inquisitor. He promised to consider the proposals I had made, concerning the sale of the whole of my copy-rights. Returned and sent the Inquisitor to press. Went to King's sale—bought the

do not think the same. Although at this latter reference Holcroft uses the phrase "as usual," I do not believe he was a usual person for Holcroft to meet, on account of the long characterization given there. Holcroft's habit in these diary entries is, it will be noted, to give the long characterizations at the time and place each man is first mentioned. Holcroft's two most likely friends for this point are William Sharp the engraver and Symmonds the publisher. The first is plausible, the latter improbable. Stoddart will do.

[1] Who published most of Holcroft's writings, George Robinson. His son and brother were associated with his business. They were particularly liberal.

bible in Welsh, Polish, Danish and Swedish: likewise Novelle di Salernitano (scarce) and other books. Saw D'Israeli there, and Rogers, the poet, but did not notice the first. Went to Debrett's: numbers there, Lords Townshend, Thanet, &c. Messrs. Francis, St. John, &c. The expedition of Buonaparte, and the news of the defeat of the Irish at Wexford, the chief topics. The Irish, it was supposed, must for the present be quelled. Met Perry, and conversed with him on the Inquisitor; blamed by him for writing too fast. Called at Opie's in the evening; sat near two hours.—Much difference of sentiment between us, but little or no ill humour.

27th.—Read Pennant, and Bower's Life of Pope Alexander the Sixth. The general system of morals at that time in Italy must have been wretchedly depraved; or this pope, and his active, but wicked son, Caesar Borgia, might have been admirable characters. They seem but to have excelled their contemporaries in wickedness. Saw Parson *Este* at Debrett's,[1] who described the sandy roads of the north of Germany as invariably heavy and bad. A nobleman, who travelled post, was eighteen days in going to Vienna; a journey of little more than 400 English miles.—Praised the wines of Hungary as the best in the world: those of the common

[1] Emendation taken from "London Library" copy. Also at pp. 182, 219, 241. A frequenter of Debrett's the Whig bookshop, and spoken of as "a fast but fanciful traveller."

inns in Germany as very bad. I read the three gazettes relative to Irish affairs, the defeat of the Insurgents, the capture of Wexford, the haughty answer of Lake to the terms proposed, and the evacuation of part of St. Domingo by the British troops. Returned to meet Colman, who broke his appointment. Wrote to him. Accompanied Fanny in a lesson after dinner. Mr. Geiseveiler played chess, and drank tea with us.

28th.—Considered my opera, but did not write. Read Middleton's dedication and preface to Life of Cicero ; a man of uncommonly sound head and heart. Walked to Debrett's ; nothing stirring. Colman came to me. The third night of the play under-charges : promises, if he can, to perform it again with the new farce, that is, if the farce brings money. Played a lesson with Fanny after dinner. Visited Mr. Geiseveiler, and met there Dr. *Gruber*, chaplain to the Austrian Embassy,[1] and Mr. *Offoss*, an emigrant, native of Brussels. The Doctor had the most

[1] All attempts to verify the name of this chaplain, through the Foreign Office, have failed. So it now stands on the single authority of the " London Library " copy, as does that of Mr. Offoss. These two men were met at Geiseveiler's, who had many Continentals at his home from time to time. They are *not* Godwin and Opie. The opinions of O—— on Shakespeare do not coincide with those of Opie expressed in Earland, *Opie and his Circle*, pp. 54, 74. They are Continentals talking about the only English literary person of whom they have much knowledge, as was usual in Holcroft's conversations with other Continentals.

literature, but the emigrant the most logic. The Doctor is a chemist, known to Mr. Nicholson, who, the Doctor says, has written the best chemical book in our language, meaning his "First Elements." [1] They both reasoned on the expedition of Buonaparte, and both seemed inclined to think him gone to the East-Indies, either up the Red Sea, and from thence across the Little Desert, and by sea to the Carnatic, or down the Euphrates into the Persian Gulph, &c. Both were convinced, it could be no such trifling object as the capture of Malta, or any Mediterranean Island. The blow, they supposed, was meditated against the whole of the power of England in India. The Doctor thinks with me, that Kant, who is at present so much admired in Germany, is little better than a jargonist.[2] Returned; made some good notes for the character of Morgan (in "The Old Clothesman") and went to bed; but my imagination being awakened, I could not get to sleep till nearly one o'clock.

29th.—Worked at my opera.—At Debrett's,—Conjectures were made on Buonaparte's expedition, and the difficulties attending it. Weld of opinion that he would cross the Great Desert as the least difficult. The transportation of artillery, ammunition, cavalry, &c. over this tract, supposed by Mr. Godfrey to be impractic-

[1] *Elements of Natural History and Chemistry* (1788).

[2] Cf. the dispute between Coleridge and Holcroft, on Kant, cited in the introduction to my Bibliography, p. 22.

able. The march of Alexander was of a very different kind. Walked with the two Parrys, who were stopped by O'Bryan and Maxwell concerning Fenwick's publication.[1] The Bow-Street people, on a late trial, were affirmed to have perjured themselves. Ford was supposed by O'Bryan to have been exempt from this guilt. It was allowed he had behaved kindly to Arthur, but not uprightly in court. For my own part, I know nothing of these matters.

30th.—Went, after breakfast, to Mr. Stodart,[2] but did not go in. Met Opie on my return. Thought myself recovering strength and activity apace. Sent into the city for proofs of the play, which were brought back. Corrected them. Wrote notes for a short preface. Received 17*l.* 16*s.* 10*d.* for my mare, which was knocked down on Wednesday for nineteen guineas at Aldridge's. In the course of this day's business, about two o'clock, leaning the pit of my stomach hastily over the edge of a desk, I was again seized with excruciating pains in my stomach; cold sweats and debility immediately followed, though the fit was, I believe, the least violent of the four, that

[1] A pamphlet on behalf of the Rev. James O'Coigly. The "late trial" would be that of Arthur O'Connor (1763–1852) and Coigly at Maidstone for high treason. Coigly was found guilty on May 22, 1798, and executed on June 7. Although O'Connor was found Not Guilty, he was not liberated until 1803.—W.-G.

[2] Sir John Stoddart (1773–1856), whose only sister, Sarah, married W. Hazlitt. To him we have attributed the remarks above on *The Inquisitor*.

I have now had. When it was somewhat assuaged, I was under the necessity of writing my short preface, my second note to W., and of correcting more proof sheets.

July 1st.—Read Boswell's Life of Johnson: the writer weak, vain, a sycophant, overflowing with worldly cunning: yet, owing to the industry with which he collected his materials, the book abounds in facts, and is amusing.

2nd.—Went to Mr. S——, paid him the hundred pound bill on Mr. Harris at six months, and received the balance: all accounts clear between him and me. Worked at my opera. Wrote scene 8 and 9, as far as "Do you hear how lottery tickets sell?" Satisfied at present with my alterations in the character of Morgan. Read the last proof of the Inquisitor. Read Boswell after dinner. Visited by Messrs. Watts and B——, and Mrs. Revely.[1] Music, Mozart and Haydn, till ten, Fanny the principal performer. I retired to rest in some pain, which increased in bed: dreamed that my body was severed above the hips, and again joined in a surprising manner; astonished to think I was alive; afraid of being struck or run against, lest the parts should be dissevered. Very angry at the thoughtlessness of a boy that gave me a blow, and again surprised that it had no ill consequences. This dream appears to be the result of the pain, and

[1] Maria Revely (*née* James), a friend of Godwin's. (See Kegan Paul's "Godwin," vol. I, p. 81, *et seq.*).—W.-G.

the waking thoughts I have had on the probabilities of life or death.

3rd.—Wrote to the Rev. G. Smith, under frank given me by Lord Thanet, containing two bank notes, value six pounds, for my father's widow. Worked at my opera a very short time. Informed by Mr. Weld that Dr. Pitcairne had been cured of my complaint. Characterised him as our ablest physician since the death of Warren.[1] Related that the Doctor and Sir George Baker were present in Warren's last moments; that Sir George wished Warren to take an opiate, which he refused. Sir George desired him to give his reasons, and Warren, turning to the Doctor, said, "Tell Baker why I ought not to take an opiate to-day." Immediately after which he clapped his hand to his breast and exclaimed "it is come again," then presently expired. Read the Reviews and Monthly Magazine. In the evening called at Opie's: they not returned from Southgate! Sat with Mr. Nicholson till ten. One game of chess: conversed of my disease; of the present vicious enunciation of thought, and its evils to society: of a universal character which Nicholson is persuaded must soon be invented, and come into general use: he himself inclined to execute the task, which he does not consider as very difficult: of Bramhead

[1] Richard Warren (1731–1797), the head of the medical practice of his day. Mrs. Inchbald composed memorial verses on his death.—W.-G. She is supposed to have been in love with him, a member of the profession for which she always had romantic inclinations.

at Devonshire-House, and Arkwright : of Tooke, and the misapplication of his powers, the sacrifice of wisdom and virtue to the pitiful triumph of the moment.[1]

4th.—Sent in Shepperson and Reynolds's account, the balance 24*l.* 4*s.* in my favor. Worked an hour or better at my opera. No news at Debrett's, except Buonaparte said to have taken Malta.

5th.—Reading Boswell's Life of Johnson at breakfast, was highly gratified by the following assertion of Johnson : " I find myself under the necessity of observing that this learned and judicious writer (Lord Kaimes), has not accurately distinguished the deficiencies and demands of the different conditions of human life ; which, from a degree of savageness and independence, in which all laws are vain, *passes, or may pass*, by innumerable gradations, to a state of reciprocal benignity *in which laws shall be no longer necessary*." [2] Visited *Carlisle*,[3] profuse in his display of chirurgical knowledge, an acute and thinking mind, disliking contradiction, tenacious of system, and generally systematizing : thought the mind ought not to endeavour to regulate

[1] John Horne Tooke, radical, parson, continually involved in legal processes either for debt, or for crime, or for invalidated elections.

[2] A pet theory of both Holcroft's and Godwin's.

[3] Sir Anthony Carlisle (1768–1840), who collaborated with Wm. Nicholson in important researches on voltaic electricity. This " London Library " attribution coincides with the opinions of W.-G.

disease, its influence being great, but, as he affirmed, prejudicial. Instanced, that people having wounds, by a close attention to their feelings in the affected part, increased its sensibility to a noxious degree; and that the bones which, he said (I think erroneously,) have themselves no feeling, had, by the attention of patients, fixed upon them when diseased, become entirely sensitive. He spoke of these facts within his own knowledge. From my own experience I believe them to be true, and think with him, that the attention so fixed upon parts diseased, may be prejudicial; but from experiments made upon myself, if the attention be fixed with a tranquil, pacifying, and cheerful temper of mind, I am persuaded they highly benefit the sufferer. This I urged; but his opinion seemed fixed. Advised me to consult Pitcairne, but did not lead me to hope, either from himself or others, any degree of medical knowledge that should be efficient. What is called nature, that is, the changes that are continually taking place, is trusted to as chief operator. Received the third volume of Ireland's Hogarth Illustrated. Clementi dined with us.

6th.—Read Hogarth, J. Ireland, vol. 3. Some valuable information, but wretchedly put together. Hogarth too irascible, and pushing his favourite points to extremes: a man of uncommon genius, and though highly admired by some, most unjustly treated by others. If it be true, which I doubt, that he did not excel in the higher parts of his art, i.e. in the beautiful

and sublime, what he has written, and what he has done, sufficiently prove, it was not want of power, but want of practice. He felt his wrongs too indignantly, and, in resenting them, wanted liberality. Manners are undergoing a great change; and though just at present, an intolerant and acrimonious spirit prevails, yet there is much less ruggedness, asperity, and undisguised insult, than there was in his time. Saw B*anks*[1] at Debrett's; the health of Porson precarious. Called at Opie's; he gone to see Hogarth's March to Finchley.

7th.—Gillies, B*urre*ll, S*toddart*,[2] called before dinner. Worked nearly one hour at the opera; the scene of Frank and Morgan for and against speculation; but as I grew warm with the subject, felt a pain similar to preceding sensations, which warned me to desist.—Read Middleton's Life of Cicero, and the pain went. Reports of the day, that Buonaparte and four or five sail of the line are taken; but disbelieved at Lloyd's: and that the insurgents in Wicklow have surprised and totally cut off the Ancient Britons, a corps hated by the Irish for the mischief done them. Affairs of Boyd and Benfield deranged; both, it is said, from mean beginnings, had attained the utmost splendour of wealth. Boyd had been successively the chief money dealer in France at the commencement of the Revolution; then in England, and for the Emperor: something like the cashier of Europe; compared to Law for enterprise and capacity, and for proving

[1] "London Library." [2] *Ibid.*

the facility of an impossible scheme. Read Boswell's Life of Johnson after dinner.

8th.—My spirits more cheerful, and my strength increasing. Read Boswell's life of Johnson; practised a little music. Purcel, a flowing, impassioned composer—his harmonies original, yet natural; and his melodies the best of his day. Is it true, as Boswell affirms, that Corelli came to England to visit him, and that Purcel being dead, Corelli immediately returned? Mr. Foulkes, before dinner, gave me an account of Coigley, as well previous to his trial, as when sentence was passed, and at the place of execution: his sentiments generous, his mind undaunted, and his behaviour heroic. Mr. Godwin's conversation, as usual, was acute, and his ideas comprehensive.

9th.—Read Boswell. Wrote notes for the opera, with song, "Old Clothes to sell," and other alterations and additions to the first exit of Morgan. Dined with *Sir Richard* Phillips (Monthly Magazine). Present *Benjamin Flower*,[1] the Cambridge man, Signor Damiani, Dr. Geddes, Pinkerton (Heron's Letters), and S*tevens*[2]; the three last, Scotchmen. S*tevens* rattled, but had read and remembered. Pinkerton said little. The Doctor rather fond of dull stories; a man of information, irascible, and pertinacious. Main-

[1] This is W.-G.'s emendation. The "London Library" copy, which I should prefer to trust, says Friend. But Flower seems the more plausible. See next reference to his name at p. 169.

[2] "London Library."

tained that a gentleman who, following the common path through an orchard, plucked apples, put them in his pocket, and left a shilling for them at the house of the owner, committed so heinous an offence, that he might justly have been shot as a robber. He scoffed at the argument and possibility of the apples being more necessary to the happiness of the man who took them, than of the legal owner. The argument is indeed hypothetical, and should be cautiously admitted. He treated the plea of benevolence, in the depredator's behalf, with equal contempt; and affirmed, he did not argue as a lawyer, but from principles of indubitable justice. I was his chief opponent, and for a moment caught some of his heat and obstinacy. One of his stories was of a Romish priest, who sent up to town to Coghlan, a Catholic bookseller, for three hundred asparagus, which the man mistook for Asperges, an instrument used to sprinkle holy water with. The joke was the bookseller's distress at not being able to procure more than forty or fifty in the time, and promising the rest. I forgot to mention Mr. *Briddell*, a teacher,[1] who informed us the wife of Petion remains still persuaded that her husband is not dead, and that he will again appear as soon as he can with safety. I related that Petion, when in England, had once dined with me, that he was so full of

[1] "London Library." The only point of departure for investigating this initial further is the fact that Holcroft met him at dinner at the home of Sir Richard Phillips, of *The Monthly Magazine*.

his own oratory, as to turn his back to the mantelpiece, as soon as he came in, and make a speech, which lasted till the dinner was on table; that as soon as eating gave him leave, he again harangued, and would with difficulty suffer himself to be interrupted, till he took his leave; and that, for my own part, I saw no marks of a man of great abilities, to which B*riddell* assented. George Dyer came in after dinner. Except myself, I have reason to believe, that all the persons at table have been occasional writers for the Monthly Magazine. I walked slowly, and fed cautiously. The foolish question of whether the next century will begin the first of January, 1800, or 1801, was mentioned by F*lower* with as much pleasure as his imagination seems capable of; for he had been present at two sumptuous dinners, and was likely to enjoy several others. He revelled in the idea of disputes which produced wagers of eating and drinking, said they were very proper, and the more uncertain and confused the better. He, as a mathematician, had been appealed to, and had decided in favour of the year 1800. Geddes remarked, that there were pamphlets which shewed the same question was agitated at the beginning of the last century. To be sure, said F*lower* it always will be a question, and it is fit it should be. Geddes was still more incomprehensible; for if I understood him, the century begins with the year 99. I asked him to explain: he said he could only do it by a diagram; but added, that after Christ was born, the year 1 was not completed till he was one

year old; to which I answered, this I believed nobody would dispute. As I found they either did not understand themselves, or at least were unintelligible to me, I dropped the question.

10th.—Left my card for *Carlisle*. Mr. *Burrell*[1] called. Has adopted the cant which from Germany has spread to England, of affirming Mozart to be a greater man than Haydn. In Germany, his theatrical pieces have given Mozart his great popularity: he was undoubtedly a man of uncommon genius, but not a Haydn. His life indeed was too short. Stoddart left his translation of Don Carlos.[2] He has executed his task reputably: the fourth and fifth acts of the play are greatly confused. The first interview of Philip II. and the Marquis of Posa, is a masterly scene. The whole is unequal; in some parts, feeble; in others, tedious: and yet a performance of which none but a man of genius could be capable. It reminds the reader of Hamlet and Othello, and of various passages in Shakespeare.

11th.—Read Boswell. Handel returned from the binders. Wrote Act I of the opera, but had some notes. Heard at Debrett's that when Pitt went to the levee, after his illness and duel,[3]

[1] "London Library."

[2] Schiller (1787). Stoddart published a translation with G. H. Noehden in 1798—.W.-G.

[3] Pitt fought a duel with Tierney, 27th May, 1798, on Putney Heath. Pitt had accused Tierney of wilfully obstructing the Bill on the manning of the Navy. The shots were fired into the air, part of them intentionally. Cf. *Gentleman's Magazine*, June, 1798, 68: 532.

the king shook him by the hand, a thing unprecedented, and violating etiquette.

12th.—Called on *Carlisle*.[1] He supposes electricity and the human will to be the same ; gave high praise to Count Rumford's experiments on heat. His imagination luxuriant, incautious, and daring. Dalrymple and the most scientific geographers, whom he met at the house of Sir Joseph Banks, are convinced of the practicability of conveying armies to India, by the way of Cairo, Suez, &c. This supposed scheme of the French still continues to be the common-place gossip of the day. Revised and copied part of Scene 18. Dr. Black said at Debrett's, that Father le Roche was hanged twice, the rope breaking when he was half strangled, and that he cursed and swore violently at being so treated. Met *Gruber* and *Offoss* at Geiseveiller's.[2] *Gruber* characterised Laudohn as a practical rather than theoretical general ; and Lacy as the reverse. Said, Laudohn was a severe and despotic disciplinarian ; instanced a Colonel, at the attack of Novi, whose regiment was engaged, and he behind. Laudohn coming up, asked him if that was his proper place, and commanded him immediately to hasten and head his regiment. The Colonel obeyed. Laudohn, however, passing the same regiment some time after, again found the Colonel in the rear ; and not waiting for any court-martial, or form of trial, shot him

[1] This, my own emendation, is substantiated by "London Library."

[2] "London Library," as above.

through the head. On another occasion, during the war with the Turks, he sent orders to General Clairfait, who commanded a corps about thirty miles distant, to attack the enemy.[1] Clairfait, a man of skill and courage, considered the superior numbers of the enemy, and their strong position, and disobeyed: but immediately dispatched a letter stating his reasons. Laudohn read the letter in presence of the officer who brought it; then tore it, and threw it on the ground. The officer asked with some surprise, what answer he was to take back. Laudohn replied, "You have witnessed my answer." The officer returned, related what had passed, and Clairfait immediately attacked the Turks, whom he routed. Laudohn when not in the field, nor employed in military duties, lived silent, reserved, and penuriously.[2] At the beginning of the Turkish

[1] Charles-Joseph de Croix de Drumez, Compte de Clerfayt (1733–1798), a Belgian who achieved distinction and rose rapidly during the Seven Years' War. He routed the Turks in 1789 at Mehadia and Schupaneck; and during the wars of the French Revolution took an active part on the side of the allies.

[2] Gideon-Ernst, Baron de Loudon (1716–1790). Born of a Scotch family, entered the Russian service in 1732 and the Austrian service in 1742. Became a Field Marshal in 1778. He fought well at Rossbach, and his actions decided the battle of Kunnersdorf (1759). He began the Seven Years' War as a lieutenant with a small detachment in Bohemia, and at the close was operating in Silesia with 60,000 men, having in the meanwhile risen by his ability to baron and lieutenant-marshal.

war, Lacy [1] and others were employed; and the Emperor, according to *Gruber*, lost the greatest part of an army composed of 200,000 men. Laudohn was at length sent as commander in chief; and the moment he was thus employed, he became cheerful, pleasant, and generous; and in about a year, so frequently triumphed over the Turks, that he compelled them to make peace. During the public rejoicings for one of these victories, at Vienna, his name was emblazoned and repeated in a variety of ways: and the Emperor Joseph II. walking with Marshal Lacy to see the illuminations, said to the Marshal, "My dear Marshal, they don't mention a word of you or me." After the peace of Teschen, Frederick II. Joseph, and the Generals in Chief, dined together; and it was remarked, that whenever Frederick addressed Lacy, or the other Austrian Field Marshals, he never gave them that title, but said Monsieur Lacy, &c.: and when he addressed Laudohn, who had not been honoured with that rank, he always called him Field Marshal Laudohn. The Emperor understood the reproof; and a few weeks afterwards, created him a Field Marshal. These particulars were told by *Gruber*. I do not know whether they are common stories; but they agree with the character of Laudohn, and are probably true.

[1] Franz-Moritz, Comte de Lascy (1725–1801). Distinguished himself as an Austrian general in the Seven Years' War at Lowositz, Olmutz, and Hochkirch. He became president of the Council of War. His disastrous campaign against the Turks took place in 1788.

When *Gruber* went, I conversed with *Offoss* on Shakespeare, of whom he had no great opinion. Corneille, Racine, Crebillon, and Voltaire, he supposed the most perfect writers of tragedy. He held verse, that is, rhyme, to be essential to the French theatre; and urged the hexameters of Greece and Rome, and English blank verse. He was unwilling to allow it was much more probable, when the tone of passion is raised, for men to speak in hexameters than in rhyme, or in alexandrines. I affirmed, they might still more easily speak in the blank verse of Shakespeare, which in reality is only an harmonious and measured prose. *Perry* at Debrett's, when he had done with Lords and M.P.'s spoke to me. Cornfactors are beginning to speculate on a bad harvest. After dinner, sat half an hour at Opie's. G. Dyer there.

14th.—Saw in the newspaper another of Garat's speeches at the court of Naples. Read one yesterday, which, for its pedantry and foppery, was highly ridiculous. Garat compares France to the ancient republics; and says she imitates them in sending out her philosophy and philosophers (himself one) to kings and states, and subjugated lands. There is something extremely offensive in the vapouring of this great nation, or rather, of the persons who take upon them to govern and be the mouthpiece of the nation, which certainly has the character of grandeur, both of virtue and vice; but which yet has a strange propensity, in certain points of view, to render itself contemptible.

15th.—Sir William B*eechey*,[1] with his young son, called: he was lately knighted. Speaks best on painting, the subject on which we chiefly conversed: said that a notion prevailed in Italy, that pictures having a brown tone, had most the hue of Titian, and that the picture-dealers of Italy smeared them over with some substance, which communicates this tone; and added, that my Castiglione landscape had been so smeared. Of this I doubt. Repeated a conversation, at which he was present, when Burke endeavoured to persuade Sir Joshua Reynolds to alter his picture of the dying Cardinal,[2] by taking away the devil, which Burke said was an absurd and ridiculous incident, and a disgrace to the artist. Sir Joshua replied, that if Mr. Burke thought proper, he could argue as well *per contra;* and Burke asked if supposed him he so unprincipled as to speak from any thing but conviction? No, said Sir Joshua, but had you happened to take the other side, you could have spoken with equal force. Burke again urged him to obliterate this blemish, saying, Sir Joshua had heard his arguments (which B*eechey* did not repeat), and desired to know if he could answer them. Sir Joshua replied, it was a thought he had conceived and executed to the satisfaction of himself and many others; and having placed the devil there, there he should remain. B*eechey* praised my

[1] This, my emendation, corroborated by "London Library."

[2] "The Death of Cardinal Beaufort."—W.-G.

portrait, painted by Opie[1]; but said the colouring

[1] J. J. Rogers gives in his book on *John Opie and his Works*, 1878, pp. 110–111, the following list of portraits :

HOLCROFT, THOMAS.

Painted probably about 1782, for Mr. Holcroft.
Canvas, 29×24 inches.
In possession of Mr. John Miers, F.R.S., to whom it was bequeathed by Mr. Francis Place, to whom Mrs. Holcroft gave it after her second marriage, in memory of kindnesses shown by him to her husband.
Seen to waist, ¾ face to right; in black coat buttoned over red waistcoat, white neck-cloth; short crisp brown hair.

—— the same.

Painted about 1798.
Memoirs (2 : 240) : "Sat to Mr. Opie, first sitting for my portrait, intended for Colonel Barry. Mr. G—— has a portrait of me painted by Opie, which was exhibited last year, a most admirable painting and likeness."

—— the same.

Painted, and exhibited No. 123 in Catalogue of Royal Academy, 1804.
Canvas, 30×25, untouched.
In possession of Mr. Charles L. Kenney, whose father married Holcroft's widow; given by Opie to Mrs. Kenney, who gave it to Madame Mergez, Holcroft's daughter, from whom it passed to Mr. C. L. Kenney.
Seen to waist, full face, short hair, stern expression, coat buttoned; holds spectacles in his left hand.
Memoirs (2 : 240) : 13 sittings, Jan.–March, 1799, "intended for Col. Barry."
Engraved anon : Longmans Exc. 1816, 4°., Mezzo, and by T. Blood, 12°., for Kean, 1816; also in 1907 ed.

was too foxy; allowed Opie great merit, especially in his picture of crowning Henry VI. at Paris; agreed with me that he had a bold and determined mind, and that he nearest approached the fine colouring of Rembrandt. Spoke in high terms of a picture by Fuseli[1] for Comus, the subject (if I understood him) the entrance of the brothers to the release of the lady: and also of a landscape now painting by Sir F. Bourgeois. Played chess with Mr. Du Val. Conceived three scenes for the opera, and sketched two of them: one was suggested by hearing a man and woman wrangle.

16th.—Mr. P*inkerton*[2] called, wishes me to read a manuscript tragedy written by himself. Wolcott lodges near him at Hampstead. *Pinkerton* formerly attacked Steevens in his Heron's Letters, therefore they are not acquainted. Steevens quarrelled with the Hampstead Stage several years ago for not having kept him a place, declared he would not ride in it again, has kept his word, and daily walks to town at seven in the morning, and returns to dinner at three in

[1] Henry Fuseli (1741–1825). The picture would be one of his forty for the "Milton Gallery," opened May 20, 1799, in Pall Mall.—W.-G.

[2] This, my emendation, is corroborated by "London Library." John Pinkerton (1758–1826), antiquarian and historian from Scotland, who produced pseudo-Scotch ballads, an *Essay on Medals* (1784), and a collection of *Ancient Scottish Poems* (1786). For a time he edited *The Critical Review*. He was noted for his research more than for his literary talents; and it is said that prejudices and eccentricities warped his judgments.

the afternoon; keeps no company, except that he has an annual miser's dinner, that is, a very sumptuous one. P*inkerton* is now forty, reads much at the British Museum, which is four miles, all but a quarter, from his house, and is an hour, all but five minutes, regularly in walking that distance. Nothing at Debrett's. Mr. Godwin returned the first act of the opera with remarks, dictated evidently by the fear, that ill-success will attend me in future, as it has in some late attempts. The strongest minds cannot shake off the influence which the opinion of a multitude produces. Louisa Mercier dined with us. Read Boswell. Still the same loquacious parasite: to whom we are highly indebted for the facts he has preserved relative to Johnson, and I had almost said for the laughter he has excited at himself. He is indeed, a most solemn, pompous, and important coxcomb. I never was in his company, but have frequently seen him in the streets. His grave strut and elevated head, with a peculiar self-important set of his face, entirely corresponded with the character he unintentionally draws of himself in his writings.

17th.—Read Boswell. The French at Turin: their thirst of dominion insatiable. It is a duty to calculate what will be the moral consequences of their vicious actions. I am sorry I have not the time (most men have more or less the abilities) for such calculations. Met Mr. Marshal, who did not much like the Inquisitor on the stage. Told me Robinson [1] lamented, in a friendly

[1] Probably the bookseller Robinson.

manner, that I was not more careful of my fame. Perhaps I am mistaken, but though the Inquisitor was certainly no more than a trifling effort, I still do not think it a contemptible one. The audience, Marshal says, were but little attentive to the story. Surely this was the fault of the performers. But the piece is printed, and if I am partial, will detect my folly. The topic at Debrett's was the two Sheares's, who have been executed for treason in Dublin. They were brothers, both in the law, but had little practice, because of their open and passionate declarations against government: were in Paris during some epoch of great conflict, mounted guard, wore the red cap, &c. as many or most other of the English did for their own safety, and are the sons of a wealthy banker, who I hear once was member for the city of Cork. In the course of the day I walked to Mr. Godwin's, King's, Covent Garden, Debrett's, and (after three games of chess in the evening), up Oxford Road and back to the billiard-table with Mr. Geiseveiller, in all nine or ten miles, after which I played sixteen games at billiards.[1] I imagine I confided too much in my strength, and took an excess of exercise, for I awoke between two and three in the morning, after getting to sleep with great difficulty, and found my sensations, or spirits, as they are called, considerably in a flutter, and my pulse very quick. I rose, threw up the window, and walked in the stream of air; a short time after which I again went to bed and

[1] At fifty-three years of age!

slept, but had very vivid dreams ; in one of them I was a riding a race horse full speed over dangerous and steep places. This and other experiments seem to confirm the opinion of Dr. Parry, that there is an undue action of the arterial system. Sketched a short scene between Frank and Clara, and considered the arrangement of the second act of the opera.

18th.—Corrected and transcribed the first scene, and wrote the duet Act 2. Met Brown of Norwich, and promised him a letter of recommendation to Hamburg. Parry, jun. at Debrett's, told him that the Emperor had issued a decree, by which persons having money in the Bank of Vienna were required to advance 30 per cent. as a loan, for which the whole, bearing at present four per cent., should be advanced to five ; but that persons refusing the further loan of 30 per cent. should receive no interest for the money already in the bank. Went to Hampstead, rode about a mile and a half. Pinkerton pleasant in manner, and apparently not ill-tempered. Professes to avoid metaphysical inquiry—his memory tolerably retentive of historical facts and biographical anecdotes.

CHAPTER II

DIARY—*continued*

JULY 19*th*. Debrett read a philippic by Francis, from his parliamentary debates, against Thurlow, delivered I think in 1784, on the India Bill. It had greater strength and a better style than I supposed Francis capable of. Went for the first time to the fruit-shop next door but one to Debrett's, and eat an ice. A notorious gambler, billiard player, and thief, called the Diamond, after a thousand escapes, has been detected in stealing stockings; is taken, and will probably be transported for life. Should I hereafter find time, some of his pranks, as part of the history of the human mind, might be worth recording. Sastres, an Italian, mentioned by Boswell in his Life of Johnson, was at the fruit shop. I asked him if he knew Boswell. The name excited his indignation; he spoke of Boswell as a proud, pompous, and selfish blockhead, who obtruded himself upon every one, and by his impudent anxiety lost what would otherwise have been willingly granted. As an instance, Johnson did not once mention him in his will, after their pretended intimate and sincere friendship; while S*astres* himself had that honour. This account did but confirm the internal

evidence of Boswell's own book. Notwithstanding Johnson's professions, which were but efforts to be kind to him, I think it impossible he should either feel esteem or affection for such a man. I drank one cup of strong tea, and another half water; to this I attribute a second restless night; I went to sleep with difficulty after twelve, awoke before three, as on the 17th, threw up the window, walked in the air, and went to bed. By an effort I had a doze of a few minutes, but was soon perfectly awake, and went into the library, where I sat undressed, pointing and correcting the opera till about five. I then went to bed and slept till nine, but it was not sound and healthful sleep. Johnson complains in one of his letters, Vol. iii. of Boswell's Life, of having had but one sound night's rest during twenty years. Johnson drank tea to excess. To some persons I have no doubt it is a wholesome beverage, to others I suspect it is highly pernicious.

20th. Called on Foulkes and Robinson, neither at home. Mr. Armstrong informs me that several persons have been afflicted like myself with hemorrhage, told me that in Ruspini's cases of cures performed by his styptic, was one of a mathematical instrument-maker, of Dean-street, who really had, as Ruspini asserts, a hemorrhage of the nose stopped by the styptic, but who died ten days afterwards in an apoplectic fit. We both conjectured such discharges of blood were frequently beneficial. Read the papers at Debrett's as usual, the same sanguinary

measures and modes of revenge mutually practised in Ireland. Played chess and billiards with Geiseveiller: drank no tea, yet had another restless night little better than the last.

21*st*. I daily but slowly proceed with my opera. Saw Banks of K*ingston* at Debrett's,[1] and M. the ——'s,[2] member in the last parliament, who very characteristically told me (somebody having sent him the translation of Schiller's Don Carlos) that he accepted every thing which was given him. I looked, and he endeavoured to correct himself, by adding, if it did not exceed the value of an octavo volume. A great gossip with little understanding, and I am almost surprised that a look should excite in him a temporary feeling of his habitual selfishness. Played chess and billiards with Geiseveiller. The marker, a garrulous old Irishman; affirmed that Irish wafers were better than English: the reason he gave was, that after a letter was sealed, you might open it, with an Irish wafer, but not with an English. He pretended to talk philosophy, said there was but one colour, and that the way to prove it was to produce total darkness, and then a brown dog would be white. The sun, he said, regulated the

[1] Henry Banks, of Kingston, was at this time a supporter of Pitt, but a more rabid politician.

[2] The same person undoubtedly as is mentioned at p. 198, M. the "member for T." They are at the Whig resort. Is it by any chance the same "M. and Lady W."? Is it the Maxwell mentioned at p. 134? Or is it J. Martin, member for Tewkesbury, or W. Morland, member for Taunton, in 1795? I choose Martin.

tides, and it is the moon, and not the sun, that is the cause of light. His own absurd manner of explaining his blunders is highly ludicrous.

22*nd*.—Wrote the chief part of scene 7, act ii. Called on Sir *Francis Bourgeois* [1] to see a landscape he is painting. It is one of his best, the tone admirable, and composition and execution spirited. After pointing out what I supposed to be its merits, I added, that the head of the cow in the fore-ground was in my opinion too large. The wide open mouth of a dog barking was overcharged: his clouds likewise, I said, were not sufficiently floating, too much in mass and not tinted as clouds on such a day always are. We conversed of *Beechey* who had made a favourable report to him of the reception I gave him, and of my pictures.[2]

On the subject of standing in the royal presence, Sir *Francis* said that Mr. Kemble seemed to doubt that this was so severely exacted: for when he and Mrs. Siddons were commanded to read a play to the Royal Family, and a splendid circle was assembled to hear them, the Lord Chamberlain came and informed them that they had permission to be seated. But this is a confirmation of the etiquette, and the exception may be accounted for in a variety of ways. He that does not fear to be invidious may begin. Sir *Francis* told me, that in the new edition of Pilkington's Dictionary of Painters, there is a life of Sir Joshua Reynolds, which some attribute

[1] This, my emendation, is corroborated by "London Library." [2] Cf. p. 148.

to Dr. Wolcott, others, to Opie.[1] Returned, read the life of Johnson. Isaac Read there mentioned as a man superior to all others, in his knowledge of English literature. I have heard Ritson say much the same; if so, it does not make him vain at least. His name, as a commentator on Shakespeare, is added to those of Johnson, Steevens, and Malone, yet I remember one day seeing him walk with seemingly great humility at the tail of the two latter; they attentive to each other, or perhaps, each to himself, and Read[2] wholly overlooked. Boswell likewise prates (for I think the term appropriate) of Dr. Towers,[3] who though a whig, is in his class of good writers. Let the works of Towers testify. As a man, when he is in a society where speeches are to be made, he is pragmatical, verbose, and overflowing with a vapid kind of rage. He too was the tail-piece and butt of the late Dr. Kippis, who, when called a man of moderate talents, is not injured.[4]

23*d*.—Read *Pinkerton's* tragedy.[5] Contains

[1] By Opie. Cf. Ada Earland, *John Opie and his Circle*, p. 134.

[2] Isaac Reed (1740–1807), critic and Shakespearian commentator.—W.-G. Concerned in the *Biographia Dramatica*. Ritson "hoped to be ranked with Theobald, Johnson, Steevens, and Malone."—Burd, *Joseph Ritson*, p. 86.

[3] Joseph Towers (1737–1799) edited Vols. I–VII of the *British Biography*, 1766–1772, and—with Andrew Kippis—the *Biographia Britannica*, 1778–1793.

[4] Dr. Kippis was Godwin's tutor at Hoxton.

[5] Cf. p. 150. Corroborated by "London Library."

some poetry and passion, presents a picture of the manners of the distant age, in which the scene is laid, superior to any thing I remember to have read: but is occasionally verbose. Has not enough of soul, and is deficient in plot. Is much better, however, than many things which pass current; wrote the Mariners' Glee, and the short scene 8, song excepted. Nothing at Debrett's except Irish affairs, and contradiction of the reports which for some days have been floating, of the capture of Buonaparte, &c. Ate little meat at dinner, took half a pint of milk and bread between six and seven o'clock, which served for tea and supper, and slept soundly. Mr. Birch came, and restored the chilled varnish of the pictures, by damping, then gently rubbing them dry with a cloth, and afterward with flannel.

24*th*.—Sketched scene 9 of opera. Attended picture-sale in the Haymarket: W. the auctioneer, late a bankrupt, paying eighteen-pence in the pound. The best pictures, all or most of them, the property of *Williamson*,[1] a picture-dealer, notorious for practising the worst tricks of that tricking trade. He bought his own pictures at high prices, the auctioneer running them up as if he had a room full of bidders, when he had not one: which artifice, I imagine, was for the purpose of asserting to his customers, that each picture fetched such and such a sum, even at auction. A man ought not to throw away his property, and a picture not fetching its worth, may be honestly bought in; but I do

[1] "London Library."

not imagine there was a hope of selling good pictures at this season of the year. No news at Debrett's. Observed the same regimen at dinner and tea, with the same success.

25*th*. Went with Geiseveiller to see the picture of the siege of Valenciennes, by Loutherbourg. He went to the scene of action accompanied by Gilleray, a Scotchman, famous among the lovers of caricature; a man of talents, however, and uncommonly apt at sketching a hasty likeness. One of the merits of the picture is the portraits it contains, English and Austrian. The Duke of York is the principal figure as the supposed conqueror; and the Austrian General, who actually directed the siege, is placed in a group, where, far from attracting attention, he is but just seen. The picture has great merit,—the difference of costume, English and Austrian, Hulan, &c. is picturesque. The horse drawing a cart in the fore-ground has that faulty affected energy of the French school, which too often disgraces the works of Loutherbourg. Another picture by the same artist, as a companion to this, is the Victory of Lord Howe on the 1st of June: both were painted at the expense of Mechel, print-seller at Basle, and of V. and R. Green, purposely for prints to be engraved from them. For the pictures they paid 500*l*. each, besides the expenses of Gillerary's journeys to Valenciennes, Portsmouth, &c.[1] Saw Mr. *Errington*[2] at Debrett's,

[1] James Gilleray (1757–1815), caricaturist.—W.-G.

[2] The name is due to "London Library." W.-G. say "Erskine," which is not very plausible.

who told me he had it from one of the treasury people, that the present King of Prussia, intending to celebrate his accession by a festival at Berlin, caused preparations to be made, and scaffolding to be raised, on which was a throne with an ascent of steps. This was noticed by the citizens, who gave the King to understand, the steps were too numerous, and the throne too elevated. They afterwards thought further of the matter, and announced their opinion, that such a festival was unnecessary, on which the hint was taken, the preparations were discontinued, and the money set apart for that purpose, was distributed among the poor. It was observed by ——, the Quidnunc apothecary, that the Government of Spain exhibited tokens of dissolution, he referring to the loan and voluntary contributions at present petitioned for there. I remarked if this argument were true, there was but an ill augury for Austria, with its forced loan of the bank of Vienna. Lord Thanet came in, and was questioned concerning a prosecution which, it is said, government have instituted against him and others, for an attempt to rescue O'Connor in the Court at Maidstone. He answered he heard this prosecution was begun, but had yet received no official notice of it. The coachman of Judge Buller, he said, was knocked down in Court, and ready to swear he, the Earl, was the assailant, though he sat with the counsel, and was never out of the eye of the Judge. The company affirmed Buller's faculties are decayed (he has had a paralytic stroke). As

a proof, he tells different stories at different times concerning this riot. Another adduced by Thanet is, that, in summing up the evidence, instead of saying the second prisoner, to whom he was referring, he repeatedly said the second witness, till Garrow at length got up in a pet, and called, "You mean the second prisoner, my Lord." *Miller* and Lady *Wallace*,[1] with her boy, were at Debrett's, the only persons when I first went. She talking her usual masculine rhodomontade concerning Fullarton's abuse of the Queen, in his speech on the regency business, which *Miller* searched for in Debrett's Parliamentary Register, but she could not point out the passage, or at least find the language which she had imputed to him. *Miller*, anxious I should know he was so familiar with a lady of rank, three times repeated her title. I kept my eye on the paper I was reading. Was this malice, or a proper treatment of petty vanity? His being once in Parliament gave him an introduction to various persons whose rank he affects to despise, but whose notice he most spaniel-like courts. A part of his gossip is, always carefully to tell what lord informed him of this, and what baronet or lady made such and such a remark. He appears to live with true Scotch economy, except that he is a great feeder and drinker. He hunts for invitations to dinner. Drank tea with Geiseveiller. *Gruber*, *Fischer*, and Gessner [2];

[1] "London Library."

[2] "London Library." Again the German friend of Geiseveiler. See pp. 144–147, noted above. Also p. 174.

F*ischer* a man of very confined intellect; being a Bavarian, he is so prejudiced as to imagine Bavaria superior to other countries in or out of Germany. Three other persons called after tea, two of them English continental traders: the third, a German from Frankfort, who has executed contracts for government, and is come to England to solicit payment, which, after three years petitioning and dunning, he is still unable to obtain. So G*ruber* tells me, who has it, I suppose, from himself.

26*th*.—Read Boswell. Worked at the opera. Bought books at King's. Went to Debrett's. The news there, that Buonaparte and his whole fleet were taken: it was communicated by Lord H*arrington* to the horse volunteers that were reviewing in Hyde Park; they immediately gave three huzzas, and it ran from mouth to mouth through the crowd. It was false. Such scenes are tragically ridiculous. An officer of note had arrived from Lord St. Vincent; conjecture immediately knew his business: Lords were the first to believe what conjecture affirmed, and men shouted and rejoiced at the imaginary destruction of their fellow beings. Buonaparte has thus been captured at least a dozen times. On one of these occasions Lord L*iverpool*, as I hear, communicating the news to one of the B*eresford*'s, began his letter with three hurrahs.[1]

27*th*.—Concluded corrections and additions to the second act of the opera. Read the papers at Debrett's. The same sanguinary measures still

[1] "London Library."

pursued in Ireland. The prevailing party there seem to contemplate the temporary success of Robespierre, but not his catastrophe. Bought more books at King's. Went with Geiseveiller to see a pretended picture by Corregio, and another by Paul Potter. The latter, I believe, is a true picture ; the sky and trees excellent ; the composition detestable : a view of some public walk in Holland, with cows and strait-lined railing, like St. James's Park before the alterations. Of Corregio having perhaps never seen a picture, I cannot pretend to judge ; but this sketch, for it is no more, produces too feeble an effect to be his, if we may decide from internal evidence. The owner modestly asks nine hundred guineas for it, or ninety-five paid down, and the same sum annually for nine years on good security. The wild expectations that men form to themselves are pitiably ridiculous.

28*th*.—Reconsidered the two first acts of the opera before proceeding with the third. Nothing at Debrett's. Read the first act of "——" carefully, making pencil marks.[1] Walked to Hampstead ; dined with P*inkerton ;* and after some pleasant literary conversation, relating to the venerable Bede, &c., made my remarks to him on his tragedy. He received them with great candour, but was much more desirous that I should correct than that he should. Requested me to take the tragedy back, and go through the four succeeding acts with the same

[1] Cf. p. 150. "London Library" gives the title, "The Rash Marriage."

freedom of criticism used in the first. I have promised to perform the task within three weeks. My sleep remarkably sound after my exercise. P*inkerton*[1] told me that when he was at Edinburgh during the American war, the Governor of the Castle received despatches. Lady W*allace*,[2] his friend, in the French sense of the word, was with him, and he was half drunk. Unfit for the task himself, he gave her the despatches to read. The lady has a warm imagination, and is delighted by a grand display; something that she read inflamed her fancy, and she exclaimed, "Governor, here is great news; you must order the castle-guns to be fired directly." The Governor took her word for it, and gave orders accordingly: but the great news, like the capture of Buonaparte in Hyde Park on Thursday, was wholly ideal. The guns were fired, the city was alarmed, crowds came running to know the reason, and the maudlin governor was disgraced and laughed at.[3]

[1] Corroborated by "London Library."

[2] "London Library."

[3] For Hyde Park incident, cf. p. 163. The Governor from 1763 to 1782 was General John Earl of Loudon. But the Constable, John Wemyss, is probably the man referred to, as the nobleman who held the titular post rarely did any of the governing; just as a Sheriff-Substitute was styled "Sheriff," the Constable was probably called "Governor." The lady's identity is unknown, principally because she did not get into *The Town and Country Magazine*, with its *tête-à-tête* Histories, and so get cleared up by Mr. Horace Bleackley.

29*th*.—Monsieur Julien, the assistant of Colnaghi, the print-seller, came with Geiseveiller to see my pictures. He formerly was an auctioneer in Paris ; where he sold some famous collections. He praised quite enough ; but the French and Italians think that is what politeness requires. Wrote additional verses to songs in the first act of the opera. Clementi and Geiseveiller to dinner. Conversed on health : I maintaining that exercise and moderate feeding were absolutely necessary for people of and after middle age.

30*th*.—Third act still under consideration. Nothing at Debrett's, but the respite of Bond in Dublin.[1] The papers state Farmer's library to have sold for *£2,210*, and his pictures for 500*£*.—King, the auctioneer, informs me the first sum is accurate, but the pictures brought only 50*£*. I saw them. They were select rubbish : unauthenticated portraits by unknown painters. The sale of Farmer's library astonished every body.[2] His rule was not to exceed three shillings

[1] Oliver Bond (1760?–1798), Irish Republican, was tried, July, 1798, and sentenced to be hanged for high treason. He was respited by the Viceroy, the Marquis Cornwallis, on the entreaty of his fellow-informers.—W.-G. Cf. p. 170.

[2] Richard Farmer (1735–1797), Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and author of *An Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare* (1767). The Catalogue ran to nearly 400 pages, concerning over 8000 books. The library had cost £5000 to collect, and sold for over £2000. The comment in the *Annual Register* is " such

for any book; except once, when he paid three and sixpence for a pamphlet, which brought fifteen guineas in the sale. This anecdote I understood to be on the authority of Dr. Gosset, who is the most constant attendant at book sales of any man in England, booksellers not excepted.—Farmer collected all old pamphlets and blank letter books, whenever he could pick them up cheap, and these were resold at enormous prices, not for the value of the information they conveyed, but their scarcity. I viewed them as they lay in the auction-room, and books and pictures seemed to be the very refuse of the stalls.

31*st.*—Finished Boswell's Life of Johnson: the author still continuing a pompous egotist, servile, selfish, and cunning; as is evident from the documents and pictures he gives of himself; and defending and condemning, not according to any principles which his own experience and observation had taught, but in conformity to those opinions, whatever they might be, right or wrong, which might most probably ingratiate him with the powerful. As a piece of biography, it is a vile performance; but as a collection of materials, it is a mine. Called on *Beaumont.*

is the rage for musty literature."—W.-G. *The Morning Chronicle* for July 28, 1798, says: "The late Doctor Farmer's Library sold for £2,210, and his pictures for £500. Such is the rage for musty literature. The whole, it is estimated, was purchased by the Doctor for a sum much under £500."

The head of Kemble painted by him for Desenfans is a fine likeness, and a good picture. Saw a pair of his landscapes, but indifferent performances. At one time he copied the old masters. One of these copies after Berghem, but in the style of Wouvermans, is a good imitation, penciled with great labour and exactness, but not with the freedom of an original. The subject, a man on a white Galloway, bird-catching; but the copy was not finished, nor the nets inserted.—Wilson, he says, was indolent, and, in his latter time, used to make several attempts at each touch, before his hand reached the precise place. In this manner a picture would remain several days on the easel, with but little apparent progress. If *Beaumont*[1] be accurate, the colours on Wilson's palette did not exceed four, and his common menstruum was linseed oil, instead of other oils eight or ten times as dear. He had much comic humour, would turn from his easel to the window, make whimsical remarks on the passengers, pause to recollect himself, and begin painting again. He was addicted to liquor, by which his nose became enlarged, and so irritable, that the handkerchief was frequently applied to it, and kept in his bosom for that purpose. Glad of every opportunity to escape from labour to his favourite indulgence, he would say to any acquaintance who happened to call, "Come, let us go and take a drop of something. I have painted enough for one day." Farington and Hodges were his pupils, and many of the pictures

[1] So "London Library."

that pass for Wilson's were painted by them, but retouched by himself. Thus the same picture became multiplied. He would even buy copies made from his pictures, work upon them and sell them as his own. To a certain degree they were such, but the practice was dishonest; for an unskilful eye could not detect the inferior parts. Arts like these are the ruin of honest and well-earned fame. Wilson, however, was a man of uncommon genius, of which he has left sufficient and undoubted proofs. He and Sir Joshua had conceived some ill-founded prejudices against each other. Under their influence, Sir Joshua once said, at the Academy, Gainsborough was the best English landscape-painter. Wilson, happening to be unperceived at his elbow, replied, "You mean the best English portrait-painter." If it was not Opie, I forget who gave me this anecdote.

August 1*st*.—Proceed with Middleton's Life of Cicero. It is full of information. Wrote a song to-day, "Dan Cupid, &c." and a glee yesterday, of "Bitter pangs," &c. for the opera. At Debrett's, Mr. Bouverie shewed me the Cambridge paper. Flower, the editor, is a zealot of a bold but honest character. By his paper, he must necessarily have made himself extremely obnoxious to persons in power. He unsparingly assails all whose creed or moral conduct he thinks reproachable.[1] Godwin has

[1] *The Cambridge Intelligencer*, edited by Benjamin Flower (1755–1829). He was imprisoned for libel in

been several times attacked in his paper, and probably myself. A letter, written from Ireland by a Colonel in the Guards, asserts, that the two O'Connors, Bond, and another, whose name I have forgotten, have consented to inform against the insurgents, and transport themselves from Ireland, on condition that the life of Bond be spared. Lord Thanet said, he had betted fifty guineas to half a crown, that this was a false assertion. I think myself certain he will win. A. O'Connor is a noble-minded man, or I am wretchedly mistaken, and it is said his brother Roger is even his superior. Met Mr. *Griffiths, Jun.*, whom I informed that the comedy of "He's Much to Blame" was written by me. He testified great satisfaction at the shame its success brought on my persecutors, and that the King, not knowing the author, had commanded it twice. Mentioned its great popularity among the country theatres; invited me to Turnham-Green, and I promised to dine there next Sunday se'nnight.[1]

2nd.—Read Middleton. Wrote a song "The Fiat of Fate," Act 3. Went to Debrett's, read a high-flown complimentary letter, from some

due course. His paper was a rare example of a provincial paper, advocating religious liberty and condemning the French war.—W.-G. Cf. pp. 140, 142. Cf. also Flower's *Political Review* and *Monthly Register*, Vols. I–IX, Harlow, 1807–11, referred to in letter from Hardy to Flower (*Add.*, 27,818, f. 71).

[1] Cf. letter concerning a previous visit, Intro., p. xxx. "London Library" specifies "Griffiths, Jun."

city volunteers, to Colonel *Ferries*,[1] a bankrupt, persuading him to continue in their command, and describing him as an unfortunate man, but of exemplary worth. *Adair* [2] remarked that the aristocrats of the corps, had thus stirred in his behalf, because he had gone through thick and thin to serve persons in power. Walked down Constitution-Hill, and wrote Clara's two songs of the third act in the Park. Just as I finished, with my pencil in my hand, I saw I was observed by General *Fitzpatrick*.[3] We know each other personally, but are not acquainted. Acquaintance indeed among persons of rank, I have very few. My feelings will not suffer me to be forward; and such persons are known only to the obtruding, or those who minister to their immediate pleasures and vices. Men of literature lay claim to honors, to which men of rank have but seldom any good pretensions; and both seem jealous of their individual prerogatives.

3rd.—Wrote Duet, Act 3. Worked at the opera. Asked Weld at Debrett's if he knew Boswell. He had met him at coffee-houses, &c. where *Boswell* used to drink hard and sit late. It was his custom during the sessions, to dine daily with the Judges, invited or not. He obtruded himself every where. Lowe (mentioned by him in his life of Johnson) once gave me a humourous picture of him. Lowe had requested Johnson to write him a letter, which Johnson did, and Boswell came in, while it was writing. His attention was immediately fixed, Lowe took

[1] "London Library." [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

the letter, retired, and was followed by Boswell. "Nothing," said Lowe, "could surprise me more. Till that moment he had so entirely overlooked me, that I did not imagine he knew there was such a creature in existence; and he now accosted me with the most overstrained and insinuating compliments possible." "How do you do, Mr. Lowe? I hope you are very well, Mr. Lowe. Pardon my freedom, Mr. Lowe, but I think I saw my dear friend, Dr. Johnson, writing a letter for you"—"Yes, Sir"—"I hope you will not think me rude, but if it would not be too great a favor, you would infinitely oblige me, if you would just let me have a sight of it. Every thing from that hand, you know, is so inestimable."—"Sir, it is on my own private affairs, but"—"I would not pry into a person's affairs, my dear Mr. Lowe; by any means. I am sure you would not accuse me of such a thing, only if it were no particular secret"—"Sir, you are welcome to read the letter."—"I thank you, my dear Mr. Lowe, you are very obliging, I take it exceedingly kind." (having read) "It is nothing, I believe, Mr. Lowe, that you would be ashamed of"—"Certainly not"—"Why then, my dear Sir, if you would do me another favour, you would make the obligation eternal. If you would but step to Peele's coffee-house with me, and just suffer me to take a copy of it, I would do any thing in my power to oblige you."—"I was overcome," said Lowe, "by this sudden familiarity and condescension, accompanied with bows and grimaces. I had no power to refuse;

we went to the coffee-house, my letter was presently transcribed, and as soon as he had put his document in his pocket, Mr. Boswell walked away, as erect and as proud as he was half an hour before, and I ever afterwards was unnoticed. Nay, I am not certain," added he, sarcastically, " whether the Scotchman did not leave me, poor as he knew I was, to pay for my own dish of coffee."

4*th.*—Continued the opera through scene 9, Act 3. Colonel Barry at Debrett's, returned from Ireland : rejoiced to see each other. Spoke of Ireland as subdued by the divisions which government had found the means to create, and chiefly by the aid of the native yeomanry. Read reviews and magazines.

5*th.*—Corrected scene 10. Wrote song for Florid. Called on N*icholson*, who had been sent for by the D*uchess* of D*evonshire ;* she broke her appointment, made another, and broke that, with a note apologising, and desiring he would come again, and bring a copy of his very excellent journal.[1] This a good deal resembles scenes I had with her in 1783, except that I made application to her (for recommendatory letters to our ambassador at Paris) which Mr. N*icholson* did not. Pinkerton, Godwin, Stoddart, and J. Parry, to dinner. Stoddart, as usual, acute, but pertinacious and verbose. Godwin clear, and concise.

[1] Wm. Nicholson, his *Journal of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry and the Arts* (1797–1802 and 1802–1815), and the Duchess of Devonshire. Cf. pp. 181, 227. Corroborated by " London Library."

6*th*.—Proceeded with the opera. Walked an hour. Returned and finished it. Nothing at Debrett's. Have read Monthly Magazine and Review for some days. Individually, the numbers of such works appear dull: collectively, they afterwards become highly amusing.

7*th*.—Read and sent the opera to Mr. Harris, with a letter. Walked to Godwin. He proceeds with his novel. Gave a favourable account of Fenwick's pamphlet on Coigley.

8*th*.—Began to consider my new comedy, which I am very desirous of enriching with numerous incidents.

9*th*.—Debrett blames Robinson for publishing another translation of the voyage of Perouse; that already published by Johnson, being complete, the size octavo. R*obinson's* edition is to be quarto, the plates in a grander style. Debrett's phrase was, he would burn his fingers. Meditated on the comedy. Conceived two incidents arising from the poverty of my characters, of a pawnbroker's shop, and an antique ring. Dine with Geiseveiller, and G*ruber*. His German friends came after dinner. F*ischer* displayed some knowledge in Grammar; but was laughed at by me and G*ruber*, for being a disciple of Kant.

10*th*.—Rose at seven, in good spirits, and apparently excellent health; persuaded, as I had been for some time, that my disease was gone, and my constitution improved. While eating my breakfast, soon after eight, was seized with a fifth fit of hemorrhoidal colic. The pain as on former occasions excruciating, yet resisted with

so much determination by me, that I am persuaded its violence was considerably abated. I continued very ill through the day. In the night my dreams were extremely vivid, often disagreeable, but not always. I read and composed poetry, that never had any other existence; engaged in metaphysical disputes; and busied myself with the plot of a comic opera. I conceived a nobleman and his servant, Spaniards, to have arrived at a castle with immense walls and turrets; and that the first thing the nobleman said, must be to tell his servant, that they were now come to the place of action, and must make their way into that castle. The various obstacles and incidents which this would afford, delighted me, while dreaming. A few years ago, having a slight fever, and lying awake in the night, I found I could speak extempore verses on any given subject (for I proposed two or three to myself), many of them approaching excellence, and the others full of high sounding words, and such as would be thought excellent by some. Fear of increasing the fever, made me rather endeavour to calm and appease my mind, than either to proceed, or try to remember those I had made, which might amount to above thirty lines in number, as I believe. Have found nearly the same facility occasionally, when actually writing poetry, after having considered my subject a certain time, and made a certain number of verses, or rather, after rouzing the faculties. In my sleep I have read many a page of poetry, that never was written. Others have told me

they have done the same. Mr. N*icholson*[1] says he has several times gone to bed with his mind wearied by considering a question of science which he could not resolve, has slept or dozed, and the resolution has intruded so forcibly upon his thoughts, that it has awaked him.

11*th.*—Sent for Dr. Pitcairne. After he was gone, the pain rather increased till I rose, half an hour after, when I experienced some relief. Was induced to examine the nature of pain, and found that it is not, and from the nature of the human frame, cannot be, incessant. Could it be so, it must soon destroy the patient. Sensations are impelled upon us. Trifles, the tickling of a hair, the trains of ideas which pain itself begets, divert the attention. These intervals appear to be short in proportion to the intensity of the pain. Played a game at chess, with Geiseveiller: at the beginning with great brilliancy; at the end, with great stupidity. Received a well written letter from Mrs. B*erkenhout*,[2] and the opera from Harris.

12*th.*—Harris firmly of opinion the opera will be a good after-piece, but a dangerous first-piece, I obliged to yield, the slave of my circumstances. He agreed to give me two hundred and fifty pounds for the piece, and the copyright; and, should it run twenty nights, to make the same three hundred. Urged me to proceed with my comedy, which I promised, if possible, to send at the close of November.

[1] Corroborated by "London Library."

[2] "London Library."

Underwood, a young artist, called to see my pictures. He was full of admiration, but he is a youth. Godwin called to enquire after my health, and Mrs. Foulkes.

13*th.*—Pitcairne called, behaved very kindly, and refused his fee. I could not visit Mr. G*ruber*, who had invited me.[1] The Parrys, Colonel B*arry*, Mrs. F*oulkes*,[2] and Geiseveiller called. Yesterday and to-day, amidst the pain, I reduced the opera, but not completely.

14*th.*—Mrs. F*oulkes* called: and Geiseveiller before and after seeing the Road to Ruin for the first time at the Haymarket. This perhaps is the only theatre in the three kingdoms, Drury-Lane and the Opera-House excepted, at which it has not been acted more probably fifty times than once.[3] The custom of the theatres prevents its being performed in London, except at Covent-Garden, where it first appeared.

15*th.*—Wrote to Harris and Robinson. Went to Mrs. B*erkenhout*, who requested my advice and aid, concerning a novel. A lively woman, upwards of sixty; widow of Dr. B*erkenhout*. From a printer's mark in the margin, there is reason to suspect her novel has been clandestinely printed. If not, it certainly was in preparation

[1] So "London Library," but I had thought it was Griffiths. See above.

[2] "London Library."

[3] It was quickly adopted in the provinces, e.g. at Bury during the fair, October 10, 1798. Sydney, *England and the English*, 2: 248. At Hull in December, 1792. Tate Wilkinson, *The Wandering Patentee*, Vol. IV, p. 58.

for the press. Completed the reduction of the opera; and proceeded, as the day before, with reading Middleton's Cicero, and correcting P*inkerton*'s tragedy.[1]

16*th*.—Visited by Dr. Pitcairne, to whom I had sent. Received his fee, is to call on Saturday. Smith, the surgeon, Mrs. F*oulkes*, Samuel S*hyring*, visitors. Read Wild Oats (having this day received O'Keefe's works) a farce, but one in which much invention and feeling are displayed. Wrote an air to Dan Cupid, in Old Clothesman.

17*th*.—Went to Debrett's, after taking the warm sea-bath. Col. B*arry* [2] and others praised the Cheltenham waters, as excellent for bilious affections. Walked home, not in the least fatigued.

18*th*.—Visited by Dr. Pitcairne. Corrected tragedy.

19*th*.—Walked into the Park, but overpowered with fatigue and heat, took rest in Whitehall chapel: was too giddy to pay much attention to the paintings of Rubens.

20*th*.—Pitcairne called, thinks I ought to eat meat, refused his fee. Hugh Trevor, and Road to Ruin, sent to Geiseveiller.

21*st*.—Mr. Ramsey, who had acted as a clergyman and physician in the West Indies, returning, was one of the first promoters, by various pamphlets, of the enquiry into the slave-trade. An agent of the planters wrote against him, accusing

[1] Cf. p. 150.

[2] All names on this page, except Pinkerton and Foulkes, from "London Library."

him of want of humanity in his treatment of the sick slaves. He was advanced in years, and much agitated; the weather was hot, he made a journey, and wrote to contradict the calumny. This brought on an inward hemorrhage, of which he died. Mr. Armstrong gave me the above account; adding, that there scarcely could be a more humane man than Mr. Ramsey. In the present state of my disorder, I am equally afraid of eating and fasting. Debility threatens me on one hand with the loss of power to repel the disease: and not improbably another fit, every mouthful I swallow. Patience and cheerfulness, experience tells me, are my best aids. I am patient, but cannot sufficiently recollect myself, so as to assume that constant cheerfulness which pain so frequently disturbs. This should be a temper of mind inculcated from infancy.

22nd.—The perseverance with which I endeavour to notice, and remember my own sensations has occasioned Mr. Armstrong to accuse me of being subject to violent and false alarms. He is mistaken. The consciousness I have of serenity, is too firm and permanent to be a deception; but I am persuaded my cure must depend on a still stricter attention to facts. Dr. Pitcairne came, prescribed, and again refused his fee. Mr. Godwin called, and Captain Johnson, an intelligent Scotch seaman, trading to Bremen and Hamburg; says the Dutch are nearly as good sailors as the English: as a proof, they, like the English, will navigate a small trader with six hands, for which the French would require

twelve, and the Spaniards twenty; yet the navigation and work, are best done on board the English and Dutch. Geiseveiller, Mrs. Shield, and T. and B. Mercier, called.

October 3*d*.—I now mean to recommence my diary, which has been interrupted by the disease so often before mentioned, on its coming to a crisis, which was all but mortal.

Went to Debrett's. Met B*anks* [1] and Parry. Saw Emery and Mrs. Mills in second and third acts of the Road to Ruin. Both have merit. Emery the most. Second illumination night for Nelson's victory. Passed through the mean streets leading to the Seven Dials. The poor did not illuminate. I was in a coach, being too weak to walk.

4*th*.—Called on Carlisle. Visited *Perry* [2] and bride; a woman of pleasing manners and intelligent countenance. On return met J. Bannister and Wathen. Dined at Kensington Gore with Mr. and Mrs. B*anks* [3] and J. Parry.

5*th*.—Mr. Attwood came by appointment, and received from me the score of "When sharp is the frost, &c." composed by me, but corrected by Mr. Shield for the opera of the Old Clothesman. Sent back the manuscript by him to the theatre. Called on by J. Bannister.

[1] "London Library."

[2] James Perry, proprietor of *The Morning Chronicle*, had married Miss Hull, 23 Aug., 1798. Cf. *Gentleman's Magazine*, Aug., 1798, 68: 722.

[3] "London Library."

6*th.*—Six pints of sweet wine given me by J. Bannister.

7*th.*—Music. Haydn. Fanny accompanied by Messrs. Watts and Mackenzie. Mr. Henry present. Dined at Turnham Green by invitation. Complaint of the *Griffiths* family of the want of rational society. The villas of the place having become the country houses of wealthy but ignorant town tradesmen. Butchers, tailors, tallow-chandlers, &c. who make these their holiday and Sunday seats. Message to *Nicholson* from *Griffiths*, inviting communication, as well as to *dine*, and further intercourse.[1] Whimsical disputes of half-drunken passengers in the coach, on my return, concerning, and descriptive of Nelson's victory. Each man, according to his own account, minutely acquainted with all the occurrences.

8*th.*—Called on *Nicholson* to deliver the message from *Griffiths*. Apothecary at Debrett's affirms there are letters in town of Buonaparte taken with his dispatches ; particularly one to his wife, accusing the Directory of having purposely betrayed him into an irretrievable situation of danger. I learnt from Mr. *Nicholson*'s commonplace book that it was on the 11th of March, 1796, that he, Arthur O'Connor, Dr. Parr

[1] Cf. Intro., p. xxx, and p. 170 *supra*. Search among available letters by Griffiths fails to reveal any letter. Nicholson had already written for *The Monthly Review* in May, 1798: and this is October 7. But "London Library" gives both these names, and I accept them.

(Bellendenus), Godwin, Mackintosh,[1] Opie, Powel (a young Oxonian brought by Parr), and Col. Barry, dined with me. I consider the meeting of so many celebrated as well as extraordinary men, as an occurrence worthy of being remembered.

9*th*.—Met Weld at Debrett's, who congratulated me on my recovery in a very friendly manner. Drank tea and sat part of the evening with Mr. and Mrs. Kemble (the father and mother of Mrs. Siddons). She, except her usual complaints of rheumatism, cheerful and conversable. We talked of Hereford, Ludlow, Worcester races, Leominster, Bewdley, Bromsgrove, Droitwich and Worcester again, as places I had played in while in the Kemble company.

10*th*.—Read the papers at Debrett's. Weld asked Parson *Este*[2] where Buonaparte is at present? In India, past all doubt, was his answer. I remarked that the parson had always been a fast, but fanciful traveller.

11*th*.—The day rainy; played five games at billiards before dinner. Went in the evening to see "Lovers' Vows" played for the first time at Covent Garden.[3] Translated from the German

[1] James Mackintosh (1765–1832), author of *Vindiciae Galliae*, afterwards recanted his radical opinions and became Sir James. Cf. C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, for these years.

[2] "London Library."

[3] One of Mrs. Inchbald's many translations. Adopted from Kotzebue.

by some retainer at court, as Mrs. Inchbald told Mr. Robinson, but corrected and altered by her. My legs so swelled that I could only stay the first four acts; which at times made me laugh, and cry heartily. Saw the Parrys at the theatre. James, as usual, fastidious and dissatisfied.

12*th*.—John Parry at Debrett's, praised the whole play, including the fifth act, of last night. B*one*,[1] the miniature painter, with Bannister,

[1] "London Library" gives "Barry." The letter B—— has been very difficult to handle properly. I have filled it in in some particular instances, but in many other cases there seems scarce ground for adequate distinction. There are the following:

Breton: A talkative individual who frequented Debrett's. Possibly it is he who is referred to at pp. 139, 180. He might be a friend of Porson's if he fills these places.

Boaden: Mrs. Inchbald's biographer, mentioned at p. 189.

Mr. and Mrs. B.: Friends of J. Parry, with whom Holcroft dined at Kensington Gore.

J. Bannister: The actor whose biography is frequently quoted in my notes.

Banks: M.P. for Kingston.

Wm. Bosville: Friend of Horne Tooke.

Beechy: The artist who has not been difficult to distinguish.

Bone: The miniature painter whom I unhesitatingly select for the above passage in preference to the "London Library" emendation.

B——: Mentioned at p. 135 and not identified.

called: B*one* saw my pictures, which he praised very much. Sold Bannister the copy of Wilson for five guineas. Finished translating the first act of Kotzebue's Indian in England, which has employed me five or six days; and as I intend essentially to alter the character of Samuel or Balham, more time will be employed in the revisal. This character has *keeping* in the original but not enough of the *vis comica*.

13*th*.—Walked to Brompton to return Mr. S*ummer*'s [1] call. Not at home. Back on foot to Debrett's: obliged to rest several times.

14*th*.—Gave young Watts the letters of recommendation for the opera band, to P*erry* [2] and Salomon. Picture-dealer's son, near Stratford-Place, brought a little oval Wilson, bought of him by Bannister, to shew me. The water enchantingly transparent, the sky scarcely less excellent, the composition in itself trifling, but most happily contrived to produce contrast. Bannister came soon after with another Wilson, which I think doubtful, yet a charming picture if a copy. I mean as far as respects the right hand part, the sky, and the distances. The figure seated is an admirable thought, and no less admirably managed. The massy dark wood (said to be Hornsey wood), appeared too lifeless for Wilson; and a person who called afterwards with Mr. Heath (I believe Corbould) said he knew the original, of which this was a copy. The price of the two, the picture-dealer told me, was fifteen pounds. Called with Bannister on

[1] "London Library." [2] *Ibid.*

Wathen, and afterwards on J. Aickin, who is determined to resign. Forebodings of bankruptcy, such trifles as wood and canvass not to be had; yet three thousand guineas lately given for an estate. Cumberland sent his Tiberius, which had been repeatedly refused, as a new play, to the theatre. It was cheerfully received till the title was read, and then immediately returned. A letter from *Cumberland* to Aickin, stated that it was a mistake to suppose it the same Tiberius; it was no longer a tragedy; and if magic, music, scenery, and dialogue, could interest an audience, he had greater expectations from this, than from any piece he had ever produced. It was the most laboured, the oftenest revised, and the best written, of all his works. The letter concluded with an appeal to posterity. *Bannister* and *Kelly* were invited to spend a week at the country house of *Cumberland*.[1] *Bannister* acknowledged he was partial to a good supper, and *Kelly* the same. Of this article *Cumberland* was sparing. I suppose, gentlemen, said he, you are no supper-eaters, a little bread and cheese and small beer is all you take. Their false modesty and contrary wishes made them feel awkward and look silly, but they confirmed him in his supposition. When supper time came, the bread and cheese and small beer appeared. They flattered themselves,

[1] At Tunbridge Wells. Cf. S. T. Williams, *Richard Cumberland*, pp. 85 and 260. John Adolphus, *Memoirs of John Bannister*, 1: 396. The play, *Tiberius*, or *The Last of the Family*, was a wretched one. These names are corroborated by "London Library."

however, that a bottle of wine would be the successor. They were deceived: not a drop of wine was brought. Two or three nights made them weary of this; and on one day, they announced their intention of departing the next. If so, gentlemen, said the host, I mean to give you a treat this evening before you leave me; and such a treat! But I do not wish to anticipate. This put them in high spirits; they imagined a couple of fowls, with good old port or madeira, would be served up; and they had highly whetted their fancies with this supposition. The evening came, and with it the treat. *Cumberland* approached with a "now, gentlemen, you shall have it; you will find whether I keep my word. Here it is. I suppose you have heard of it? Tiberius, I can assure you the best of all my works." So saying, he spread his manuscript, and began to read. *Kelly* without ceremony, fell asleep in the first act. *Bannister* with great difficulty listened through the second, when the author luckily became tired of his task, either from the labour of reading, or the drowsiness of his auditors.

15*th*.—Walked out before noon, intending to proceed half way to Hammersmith, and then take coach; but finding I had not motive enough to overcome my weakness, turned back and went to the billiard table, where I played an hour and a half. Such is the efficacy of having a motive.

16*th*.—Nobody at Debrett's. Finished translating the second act of the Indians. Mr Carlisle called. I not at home.

17*th.*—Called on Carlisle. Saw a picture of fish well painted, but praised by him extravagantly.

18*th.*—Walked to Debrett's and King's auction room. Saw Sturt, M. P. and Parry, jun. Mr. *Pinkerton* [1] called in the forenoon. Praised the passion and power of language with which my tragedy, he says, is written.

19*th.*—Finished translating the Indians. Called on Opie; saw his view of St. Michael's mount, a moon-light, the manner hard, but the scenery and effects grand, and the composition good. A well painted portrait likewise of Dr. *Alderson.*[2] Went to Birch, saw a Berghem, as he said, but which I doubt; a good picture. Walked from thence with Bannister, to Simpson's (picture cleaner). Saw the famous Niobe landscape by Wilson, and another by him, lately bought of Sir William Beechey, which Sir William told me was, according to Farrington's account, partly the work of Wilson, and partly of Farrington. Simpson angrily asserts Farrington never touched the picture, and asks fifty guineas for it.

20*th.*—Called on Sir Francis Bourgeois, saw the additional pictures of Desenfans.[3] He, as

[1] "London Library."

[2] Father-in-law to Opie. Ada Earland: *John Opie and his Circle* has helped to fill in many of these places, and here to correct the W.-G. note. Also corroborated by "London Library," which W.-G. evidently had not seen.

[3] Noel Desenfans, a French art dealer, was collecting pictures for a proposed National Gallery for Poland

usual, spoke highly in praise of Kemble.[1] Weld very civil at Debrett's. Billiards in the evening. Compton, auctioneer, Moore, the attorney, another person, and Palmer, jun. author of the epilogue to "Lovers' Vows" came in. All extremely civil to me. When I returned home, found Salomon, who accompanied Fanny with his usual feeling and enthusiasm. Spoke in raptures of Haydn, which well accorded with my own sentiments. Staid till one o'clock, and occasioned me to eat too much supper. Promised to favour Watts, if in his power. Is desirous of setting an English opera.

21*st*.—Called on young Watts concerning the opera engagement. Saw Da Vinci's battle of the Standard by Edelinck, a proof of Edmonds's, upholsterer, cost him two guineas; cheap, I believe, at five. Saw Mrs. Shield. After dinner, was above an hour walking with Fanny to the top of Oxford-Street and back.

22*d*.—Wrote to Shield. Read the papers. Letter from Dr. Parry, advising me against the Bath waters. Dined with Robinson. Thursday, Robinson and myself are to exchange acquittances.

when it ceased to be an independent nation. After vainly endeavouring to dispose of the collection Desenfans left it on his death to his friend, Sir Francis Bourgeois. Bourgeois died in 1811, and bequeathed the collection to Dulwich College, with £10,000 for the erection of a gallery.

[1] "London Library" adds: "His sagacity, versatility of manner with different people, etc."

23*d*.[1]—Called on Aickin. Debts accumulating, business neglected, promises never kept. Hammersley's receiving clerk in the treasury, the whole in a state of disorder, yet the houses great. The Walkers, of Manchester, ruined by the war and ministerial persecutions. Francis and T*arleton* [2] at Debrett's. The latter, as usual, sanguine in describing the progress of Buonaparte, whom he conveys to India with great facility, asserting, Egypt and the revolutionizing of crocodiles, were not the objects of Buonaparte.

24*th*.—Returned Mr. Boaden's call,[3] and there saw a female portrait, said to be by Leonardo da Vinci, but I think not, though an excellent old picture. Met Banks, Weld, and Bosville, at Debrett's.[4]

25*th*.—Called on Mr. Compton, who advises no sale of effects till the spring. Proceed daily, but slowly, in correcting the Indians. Papers at Debrett's. Robinson did not keep his appointment.

26*th*.—Compton, auctioneer, called and looked at books and pictures. Debrett's. Wrote to Mr. P*inkerton*. His wife ill.[5]

[1] "London Library" adds: "Wrote to Mrs. Fenwick; the family in a miserable condition."

[2] "London Library."

[3] James Boaden (1762–1839), who wrote the *Memoirs of Kemble, Mrs. Inchbald*, etc.

[4] "London Library" adds: "Mr. and Mrs. Fenwick to dinner: promised my endeavours towards procuring money to set up a day school for her."

[5] "London Library."

27*th.*—Clementi called, but Fanny was out. Mr. Montagu [1] called. He attends the Old Bailey bar, from a desire to save the lives of the culprits. Talked a little metaphysics. I read Pope's character of Atticus to him.[2]

28th.—Called on ——, and conversed with Mr. Buller on occult and final causes. Saw Tobin's brother. Two girls of the town, walking in Newman Street, praised the goodness of God; and, as the weather had been very rainy for some days, they hoped his goodness would extend itself to render it fair all the next week, that they might walk the streets in comfort. A man being tried for a capital offence at the Old Bailey; the jury retired to consider of their verdict. The three principal witnesses had been ordered out of court, after having given their testimony, but stood in the passage at the door. The reward for convicting the man, as usual, was forty pounds. The jury returned, and pronounced the fatal sentence, Guilty. As soon as the sound reached these witnesses, they jumped up, clapped their hands, and exclaimed to each other, Guilty! Guilty! M*ontagu* was in court and witnessed the transaction.

29th.—F*orster*,[3] jun. came to ask me to petition the proprietors of Drury-Lane Theatre for a

[1] "London Library"; but probably not Basil Montague.

[2] "London Library" adds: "At 8 in the evening Mr. Montagu went to Mr. Godwin's, and brought home Fanny, who had been detained by the rain."

[3] "London Library."

dresser's place, for the wife of a door-keeper, who had died suddenly, in the exercise of his office. I could not comply, because of the very improper conduct of these proprietors in refusing to notice the letters I wrote to them, when they ceased, without any apparent cause, to play "Knave or Not?" But I agreed to write a letter for the woman to copy in her own name.

30th.—Wrote the letter; *Forster* having appointed to come for that purpose at nine, was with me at ten. Young *Sutton*, and *Buller's* [1] nephew, came in their father's name to ask for orders. Both families are rich, but I complied and procured them. *Bosville* and *Nicholl*, M. P. being at Brighton, where Major *Reynell* was,[2] *Nicholl* praised the Major as a man of great information, his friend, and one with whom *Bosville* ought to be intimate. *Bosville* said, they had met and spoken, and as there could be no great harm, he would accompany *Nicholl* to visit *Reynell*. They happened to meet him, and *Reynell* presently took occasion to tell *Nicholl*, that, from the principles he professed, and the speeches he had made in parliament, he could not but consider him as an enemy to his king and country, he therefore desired they might have no more intercourse. *Bosville* laughed at *Nicholl* and his friend, but remarked the Major was an honest man, for most people would have said as much when he was absent, without the

[1] "London Library."

[2] Names from "London Library."

courage to declare such sentiments to his face. Hare, St. John, and others, at Debrett's.

31*st.*—*Pinkerton*[1] and I had a dispute concerning Shakspeare. He asserted, quoting Gray and Warton as his supporters, that the thing in which Shakspeare excels all other writers, and in that only, is sudden bursts of passion. I allowed he did excel other writers in this, as in almost every other part of composition, but that he excelled them most in the full flow of passion. I doubt I was abrupt and dogmatical, for he appears to be a good-natured man ; yet I could see he went away displeased.[2]

November 1*st.*—Met Weld and H*are*[3] at Debrett's. Pitt met H*are* on horseback, the day on which it was determined to strike Fox's name out of the list of privy-counsellors, and made such strange faces at him, that H*are* went to Brookes's and reported him mad ; on which a person present said, "that accounts for a strange speech, as I thought, of Grenville, who affirmed, that while Pitt was in his present temper, he would not see him, but in the presence of a third person." The——said to be of the Orange party, and inimical to Cornwallis. Weld affirms, that since London was a city, it never had such immense exports as at this moment.

[1] "London Library."

[2] "London Library" adds : "Mr. and Mrs. Fenwick and family dined with me. Wrote to Robinson on behalf of Fenwick and he promised to call on me."

[3] "London Library."

2*nd*.[1]—Wrote yesterday an apology to P*inkerton*, for my warmth in dispute; and received a very friendly and proper answer to-day.

4*th*.—Music at Mr. Mackenzie's. Haydn's symphony quintetto and Mozart: both men of uncommon genius, but the latter impatient after novelty and superior excellence, often forgets the flow of passion in laboriously hunting after new thoughts which, when thus introduced, have the same effect in music, as the *concetti* of the Italians have in poetry; and for these Mozart is frequently extolled as superior to Haydn.

6*th*.—Went and settled with Mr. Robinson, that is, I made over to him the copies and copyright of "School for Arrogance," "Deserted Daughter," "Man of Ten Thousand," "Knave or Not," "Hugh Trevor," and "Anna St. Ives," in consideration of an acquittal of sums due to him, to the amount of 340l., and a conditional promissory note on his part to pay me 150l. more, when the copies and copy right shall have realized to him the sum of 504l. Procured a copy of the "School for Ingratitude," advertised by Bell gratis, that is, at the author's expense; he being angry, or rather, enraged at the plagiarism which he (falsely and ridiculously) accuses Messrs. Sheridan and Richardson of committing, by communicating his manuscript to Mr. Reynolds to aid him in writing the comedy of "Cheap Living."

[1] "London Library" adds: "Advanced Fenwick 3*£* to support his wife with necessaries."

7*th.*—Called on Carlisle. Conversed on the necessity of cultivating youthful sports and habits in mature and advanced age. Bought books at King's. Met Harris, the manager, and soon after, Tierney, M. P.; both congratulated me on my recovery.[1]

8*th.*—Read Walpole's Painters.—Looked over and considered the scenes of my new comedy, of which I have sketched about six. Papers at Debrett's; picture sale in Cloak-Lane. A walk altogether of about seven miles. Copies and rubbish at the sale. Sent Robinson an advertisement of my works, with an order to Symmonds to deliver the Narrative, and Windham's letter.

11*th.*—Called on, and conversed with Geiseveiller concerning his new enterprise. Saw a proof of Duncan's Victory, by Fittler, which I think but indifferent. Went to, and conversed with, Aickin on the subject of the Exiles. Kelly very desirous of having something of mine to set. Aickin informed me that Tobin has written two dramatic pieces.

12*th.*—Wrote to T*uthill.* Read the papers.

14*th.*—Wrote two songs for the "Exiles,"[2] the second of Balaam, and the first of Harry. [Pinkerton called; had] Dined on Monday with

[1] "London Library" adds: "Called on Nicholson: advised him to point out the utility of inventions and other matters which he selects for his journal, to collect extraordinary and useful facts recorded, but neglected or forgotten in the Philosophical transactions, Memoirs de l'Academie des Sciences, etc."

[2] See my Bibliography, p. 77, for a discussion of this translation.

P*hillip's* Platonist Taylor, and D'*Israeli* present.[1] Taylor, intolerant and abusive to all who do not pretend to understand and put faith in his Platonic jargon. Had he the power, according to P*inkerton*, he would bring every man of us to the stake. From my own experience, P*inkerton's* description is scarcely exaggerated; but though a bigot, Taylor is an honest one. D'*Israeli*, on the contrary, asked P*inkerton* whether he had any principles? and when P*inkerton* expressed his surprise at such a question, D'*Israeli* declared he had none.[2] Saw Dr. Towers at Debrett's; his democracy still maintains its violence; I should scarcely exceed if I said its virulence. He asked me if the universal defection had not made me turn aristocrat. I answered, that I supposed my principles to be founded on truth, that is, in experience and fact: that I continued to believe in the perfectibility of man, which the blunders and passions of ignorance might apparently delay, but could not prevent; and that the only change of opinion I had undergone was, that political revolutions are not so well calculated to better man's condition, as during a certain period I, with almost all the thinking men in Europe, had been led to suppose. The Doctor doubted man's perfectibility; was more inclined to think him a radical sinner; and said, as I held such opinions, I was, no doubt, a Necessarian, to which I readily assented. I do not know what connexion the Doctor found

[1] "London Library."

[2] Names from "London Library."

between perfectibility and necessity; though such connexion does certainly exist. Among other things I said, the best of us at present understood morality very imperfectly: his sanctity took offence at the assertion, and he replied, that some of us (meaning, no doubt, himself, and, others who hold his tenets) understood it in full perfection, at which I could only smile and dissent.

15*th.* Saw pictures on show at Christie's, a wretched collection. Met *Heath* in the room to-day, and *Moddiman*[1] yesterday; though both excel as engravers, their remarks shewed they had but little judgment of pictures; a circumstance I have had frequent occasion to observe in engravers, and indeed in painters, though not perhaps so generally. 'Tis seldom that a tolerable painter is not a good judge of the mechanical defects or excellences of a picture. Read at Debrett's, in the papers, the manly behaviour of Tone, tried at Dublin, and cast for high-treason. Johnson the bookseller sent to the King's bench Prison for selling Wakefield's pamphlet.

16*th.*—Read the first act and part of the second of the Indian Exiles, to Bannister; and am convinced, by the effect it produced upon him, that it is much too dull for representation. I doubt how far it is worth the trouble of alteration. Met Sir *Francis Burdett*, lately come to town, at Debrett's.[2] He was very kind. Went

[1] "London Library."

[2] Probably, at the Whig resort, though it might have been Sir Francis Bourgeois, except for the phrase, "lately come to town."

to the picture-sale at Christie's. The stable-yards, asses, and pigs of Morland, as usual, fetched a good price.

17*th*. M*itchel* [1] called, and, speaking on that subject, expressed his sorrow and surprise that Williams should be acquainted with M——,[2] whom M*itchel*, like most other people, considers as a very odd character. I mentioned what I conceived to be artifice in the conduct of W*illiams* as a public preacher. M*itchel* defended him against the charge, and gave me the following information. The famous Dr. Franklin, the present Sir J*oseph* B*anks*,[3] Dr. Daniel Chas. Solander,[4] Bentley, the partner of Wedgewood, and perhaps some few others, were desirous of putting a plan, conceived by Franklin, into practice ; which was, to have a kind of chapel, or meeting-house, where all matters of faith should be omitted, and pure morality taught. W*illiams*, at that time a dissenting teacher from Wales, was fixed on as the preacher at this new

[1] "London Library."

[2] Possibly Capt. Thomas Morris, a song-writer of the time, who wrote a *General View of the Life and Writings of Rev. D. Williams* (1792), and lived quietly at Hampstead, suggesting emendations to Pope and re-reading the Iliad and the Odyssey each year.

[3] Corroborated by "London Library."

[4] Daniel Charles Solander (1736–1782). Swedish naturalist and companion of Sir Joseph Banks and Captain Cook in a voyage round the world. Thomas Bentley (1731–1780) entered into partnership with Josiah Wedgwood (1730–1795), the potter, in 1768.

chapel, but at this period, Franklin was obliged to conceal himself from Government on American affairs, and remained some days shut up in the house of *Williams*, who at that time was a teacher of youth. The scheme, however, did not drop. A small chapel in Margaret-Street, Cavendish-Square, was hired to these moralists at one part of the Sunday, and to Methodists on the other. *Banks* and Solander acted with great shyness, if not hypocrisy, and instead of countenancing Williams, and promoting the plan, they now and then peeped into the chapel, and got away as fast as they decently could. Bentley and *Martyn*, the Member for *Tewksbury*[1] were more open in their conduct, but Bentley and *Williams* disagreed because Bentley urged him to insist on the immortality of the soul, and *Williams* replied he could and would teach no other doctrines than such as agreed with the original plan. *Mitchel* attributed the failure of the plan to this defection of *Banks*, Solander, and Bentley, but here I think he is mistaken. I attended this chapel myself, and became acquainted with *Williams*, whose manner was much too dry and cold, and his reasoning too confused either to warm the passions, or sufficiently interest the understanding. He afterwards saw me at the Sunday evening society, where discussion and the reading of philosophical papers were the business of the meetings; at these I read some papers, and my manner was so far animated, as to induce *Williams* to propose to me that he and

[1] "London Library."

LETTERS

ON

POLITICAL LIBERTY.

ADDRESSED TO

A MEMBER

OF THE

ENGLISH HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ON HIS BEING

CHOSEN INTO THE COMMITTEE OF AN ASSOCIATING COUNTY.

Deerant quoque littora ponto. Ov.

LONDON:

Printed for T. EVANS, in the Strand.

MDCCLXXXII.

Written by the Revd. David Williams and given to me, Thos. Holcroft by Mr Swainson July 2d. 1782

I should resume the plan of the chapel, and be joint preachers, which I positively declined. Since this time, we have met and spoke in the streets, but nothing more.[1]

18*th*.—Walked to Hampstead and dined with P*inkerton*. He asked explanation of various of the corrections I advised and had made with pencil-marks in his tragedy. I had only gone through the four first acts, and he requested I would revise the fifth. Speaking of Dr. G*illies*[2] he said, that in 1792, it was his custom to declaim vehemently at the Stratford coffee-house, in favour of republicanism; and finding the alarm that was raised, and the tide turning, he soon after wrote in praise of the King, of mixed

[1] Cf. interesting article on this David Williams in the D.N.B. The *Letters on Political Liberty* by him were in Holcroft's library. Sir Joseph Banks, the circumnavigator, was the subject of one of the *tête-à-tête* Histories in *The Town and Country Magazine*, 1773 (5 : 457).

[2] Might be either Dr. Gisborne, M.D. (? –1806), who became physician in ordinary to the King, or Dr. Alexander Geddes, whose writings agree with the change in politics mentioned. Pinkerton and Dr. Geddes and Holcroft had been together at a dinner not long before. Cf. p. 140. Yet "London Library" gives full details concerning Dr. Gillies, which we accept. John Gillies (1747–1836) was distinguished not only for being historiographer of Scotland, but also as author of a very popular *History of Greece* (1786), several times reprinted and translated. A contemporary said he was "a man of good intentions, a passable scholar, an indefatigable reader, and of most respectable character."

monarchy, and of the peculiar happiness derived from it by the English. The doctor had been tutor to Lord H*opetour*, for which an annuity was settled on him of a hundred a year. About the time of his turning royalist, Dr. R*obertson* died, and the place of *Historiographer of Scotland*, becoming vacant, G*illies* went to Lord H*opetour*, who was intimate with Dundas ; and proposed, if his lordship would procure him this place, he would resign the annuity. The proposal was accepted, the place procured, and the doctor's loyalty and royalty confirmed. Speaking of his literary talents, P*inkerton* joined with me in thinking them rather below than above mediocrity. We differed in opinion concerning the perfectibility of man, against which he quoted the traditional and written authority of five thousand years, treating the supposition with great contempt, and some degree of humourous ridicule. According to him, men grow more corrupt so rapidly, that in his youthful dealings with booksellers, &c., he met with nothing but open fairness, and at present he is obliged to be continually on his guard against cheating and chicanery. I could only answer, that for my own part, I found no such general depravity to combat ; and that granting it were so, this was a narrow ground, belonging to temporary and local incident, by which the great question could not be decided.

20*th*. Called on Sir Francis Burdett, who had just been reading in the newspaper the King's intended speech to-day (which for some sessions

past has been published the morning before it is spoken) and eagerly asked my opinion what he, as an honest member of Parliament, ought to say, thinking it highly objectionable. I read it over, and pointed out parts which I consider, some as vicious in principle, others false in fact. He repeated the summary or skeleton of what he intended to say, part of which was sound sense, and part a repetition of questions a thousand times ineffectually asked. During the day, sketched the beginning scene of Hobson and Dobson.

21*st*.—Worked at my comedy. Fairfax and Curtail, Headlong and the tradesmen, &c. Several politicians at Debrett's, canvassing the King's speech, &c.

22*nd*.—Met a political parson at Debrett's, whose first recollection was where he was to dine. Said that Brown, the Egyptian traveller, affirmed Buonaparte is safe in Egypt, and that Egypt was alone the grand object of the expedition. Received a friendly letter from Dr. Parry.

23*rd*.—Sketched in part the scenes of Melford and Caroline, Caroline and Fairfax, and Caroline and the wife of Norman. Think of rejecting the idea of twin-sisters. A wicked recruiting hand-bill of Ireland, published in to-day's Chronicle. Spoke of it to General Hastings and others. It excited universal abhorrence.

24*th*.—Walked to *Symmonds's*,[1] Paternoster-row, for the account between us, which he sent in

[1] Corroborated by "London Library."

the evening, wishing me to deduct seventy-six of the Narrative, and twelve of the Letter to Windham, which he pretends to have been lost by the binder, and this since the last settling, during which period the account states only three sold. Saw two or three good pictures at Nodin's, Leadenhall-street. Met Osmond, whom I had not seen for some years. He remarked, I was much altered and broken. He was the same to me. Time effects these changes, especially, as in my case, with the addition of illness, in despite of the little wisdom we at present possess. Conversed with Ward, the pugilist; a man who has been remarkable for uncommon agility, as well as strength and courage; his language illiterate, his countenance and manner vulgar, yet to a certain degree pleasing, and his intellect remarkably quick. He was once so famous at fives, that he beat every opponent, with right, left, or back hand, by his extreme activity. He is now among the best players at billiards. The method practised by pugilists, to bring themselves into condition, as they term it, is air and exercise, regular hours, not more than a pint of wine a-day, lean meat, especially beef, and fowls, with few vegetables. This regimen may be instructive to persons wishing to recover activity and strength. Met Jew K*ing*,[1] who from his conversation and

[1] John King. See a letter from Godwin to him, Jan. 24, 1796, concerning "the frequency of my visits." (Kegan Paul: *William Godwin*, 1: 155.)—W.-G. Corroborated by "London Library."

physiognomy, does not appear to grow more wise and placable, as he grows older. Again invited me to renew my visits, which I do not intend, and spoke of the frequency of those of Godwin, as I suspect, with exaggeration. Soon afterwards, I was in some danger of being run over by *Buller Danvers*, his son-in-law,[1] driving a kept woman furiously in a curicle. The coincidence of these rencontres was whimsical.

25*th.*—Called on Stoddart, not at home. Received a letter from him complaining of marked disrespect from me. Answered by truly denying any such intentional behaviour. Godwin, Carlisle, and the two Tobins to dinner, Stoddart came in the evening. Carlisle spoke of a woman who had been five-and-twenty years in bed, from a cancerous disease, and who is still living.

26*th.*—Saw J. Robinson, Sir Francis Burdett, and Este, at Debrett's. It is said, in a newspaper, that Kotzebue is imprisoned by the imperial Government, for his democratic principles. Mr. Aspin, who printed Fenwick's pamphlet on Coigley called.

27*th.*—T. North, Lord Thanet, &c. at Debrett's. The ravages of the yellow fever at Philadelphia and New York, detailed in to-day's Chronicle. Courtney says, he lately read in one of Dr. Franklin's letters, a passage where the doctor foretold epidemical diseases, if draining and cleanliness were not more carefully practised.

[1] See Taylor's *Records* (2 : 342); Augustus Richard Butler-Danvers, step-son, not son-in-law.

28*th.*—Called to settle with *Symmonds*, reminded him that the preface I wrote, and the proofs I read for him, while a prisoner with him in Newgate, had I charged them, if charged at twelve guineas, would not have been more than a third of the value of my time, yet I had charged nothing, nor should, unless he contested a fair account. This induced him immediately to allow the balance due on the sale of my books. Papers at Debrett's. On Thursday the 22d, Fanny met the Miss Harts, drinking tea with Miss Banks; they are the [*natural*] daughters[1] of Horne Tooke. Horne Tooke takes some pleasure in praising his daughters, which he sometimes does by those equivocatory falsehoods, which are one of his principal pleasures. Of the eldest, he says, "all the beer brewed in this house is of that young lady's brewing." It would be equally true were he to say, all the hogs killed in this house are of that young lady's killing, for they brew no beer. When a member of the Constitutional Society, I have frequently heard him utter sentences, the first part of which would have subjected him to death, by the law, but for the salvo that followed; and the more violent they were, thus contrasted and equivocatory, the greater was his delight.

30*th.*—*Pinkerton*[1] to dinner. Manuscript letters of James I., Prince Henry, &c. in the Museum. *Pinkerton* had been reading them, says the character in which they are written, is

[1] "London Library."

[2] Corroborated by "London Library."

uncommonly beautiful; and that many of them addressed to Prince Henry, were from projectors and improvers with which that time abounded. Henry delighted in patronizing and encouraging them. P*inkerton* of opinion that the high character given of Henry was well deserved.

December 5th.—Saw Cumberland's Word for Nature first time, was much pleased. He too often unravels his whole fable, which is slight enough, in the first or second acts. In this, some little suspense is preserved, and very much of those generous feelings, which interest while they improve. His usual self-conceit was exceedingly prominent in the prologue, and sufficiently so in the play. The epilogue was an incongruous farrago, and took away much of the pleasant feeling the piece had left. It likewise was egotistical. In the dialogue, he was guilty of his common fault, a repeated play upon words, little better than quibbling; and though not held in so much contempt, inferior perhaps to punning, of which it is but a meagre species. His characters of the termagant wife, hen-pecked husband, and old officer, are repetitions of himself: that is, of Ironsides, with Sir Benjamin and Lady Dove, in the Brothers; except that in the Brothers, if I remember rightly, the three characters are much better drawn. The chief, and almost the sole merit of the present comedy centers in the youth Leonard, to whom all the rest are very properly made subservient adjuncts. In this comedy, as in the Wheel of Fortune, there are some few

impertinent excrescences. These two pieces, however, have more of wholeness and simplicity in the fable, than most others in the English language, of those at least that, because of their insipidity, are not forgotten. These are the thoughts that occur after having once seen the comedy. Perhaps when I read and consider it more attentively, I may correct or alter my opinion. It was received.[1]

6th.—The papers to-day have been less favourable in the account given of Cumberland's comedy, than I supposed they would have been.

7th.—Coming from Debrett's, I met *Siddons*,[2] who likewise spoke unfavourably of Cumberland's comedy.

8th.—Call from Mrs. *Fenwick*.[3] She was much affected at being told by a tailor, who works for Mr.——, that my amanuensis had reported my opinion of Mr.—— to be, that he was not a man of principle. I replied, that if I had ever conveyed a thought to my amanuensis which might be so interpreted, it was, when dictating this diary, the contents of which I supposed he would have regarded as sacred, and not have repeated to the disturbance of any person named in it. I added, that the diary was intended as a memo-

[1] Writing for *The Monthly Review*, January, 1796 (19: 34–5), Holcroft had spoken of "the ease, the flow, the vivacity which characterizes the successful productions of Mr. Cumberland." He said: "He writes with too much of the *sans souci* of a gentleman, and too little like a severe disciple of Horace."

[2] "London Library." [3] *Ibid.*

randum of my present conduct, opinions, and intercourse, and to serve in future, as a depository of facts, which both I and others might wish should be preserved. Many of them must doubtless be trifling, others may turn to use, and that this end is desirable in our most insignificant actions. I told her that if by the word unprincipled, any planned intention to defraud was understood, I never had expressed such an opinion of Mr.——, because I had no such opinion ; though his conduct was reprehensible, yet I was satisfied his intentions were honest and kind. The assessed taxes the chief subject of conversation now at Debrett's. There was yesterday in the Chronicle, what was called "a scale," stating, as is the case, according to the proposed bill, that a man of five-hundred a year landed property, which will sell for (say) twenty thousand pounds, during his life, or leave five-hundred a year to his descendants, is to pay fifty pounds per annum assessment. That a man of five-hundred a year annuity, which will sell for only a small part of that sum, and, if not sold, leave nothing to descendants, must pay the same. And lastly, that a man making five-hundred a year by his profession, which during life, will sell for nothing, and leave nothing at his death, must still pay fifty pounds annual assessment. Went with Fanny and Mrs. and Miss B*anks*[1] to Covent-Garden, to a new comedy performed there, written by Reynolds,

[1] Cf. p. 204. Also corroborated by "London Library."

called "Laugh when you Can." A strange mixture it would be to compare it, as a whole, with Cumberland's, yet it has sallies of humour, which Cumberland cannot reach, and will probably have a temporary popularity.

9th.—Called on *Carlisle* [1] who shewed me a plan for a new school of anatomy.

11th.—Saw *Parry* [2] at Debrett's, told him my intention to go abroad.

12th.—Mr. *Hare* [3] at Debrett's remarked that Canning's fine speech in the House of Commons, was rather a reply to what Canning supposed Tierney would have said, than to what Tierney did say.

13th.—At Debrett's, Weld rallied Tarleton on his approaching marriage, and military appointment. Spoke with me concerning Sheridan's

[1] Sir Anthony. Corroborated by "London Library." See *Royal Society, Catalogue of Scientific Papers*, 1 : 1867, for list of writings.

[2] "London Library."

Holcroft knew three P.'s well, Palmer the actor, Perry the journalist of a Whig frame of mind, and Pinkerton the scholar. To these we must add J. Parry.

I have definitely attributed most of the occurrences to either Perry or Pinkerton. But the following remain :

p. 147, P. at Debrett's, filled in but questionable.

p. 229, P. at Debrett's, filled in but questionable.

p. 230, Called on P. who read me, etc., questionable.

p. 234, Mr. P. at Phillips's auction rooms, questionable.

p. 184, P—— name linked with Salomon concerning position at the theatre.

[3] Corroborated by "London Library."

opera. T——r having quarrelled with S*heridan*[1] swore he would never be friends again; for he never pulled off his hat to him in the street, but it cost him fifty pounds, and if he trusted himself in the same room, a hundred. S*heridan* still supposed to be concerned in the Haymarket. At Opie's in the evening. Northcote present. Northcote animated, as usual. Related a comic conversation between himself and a frame-maker, who had never heard the name of Northcote, nor noticed it in the prints he had framed, though he remembered the names of Sir Joshua Reynolds, West, Opie, &c. After supper, stories of terror were related.

One, of a lady waked from sleep, who suffered her lap-dog to lie at the foot of her bed, and feeling something move, bid the dog lie still, at the same time stretching out her arm, to feel him; but instead of a lap-dog, took hold of a hand. When a voice bid her lie still, make no noise, but deliver her keys. The lady was a woman of courage, and immediately complied, only requesting her daughter might not be disturbed, who was sleeping by her side. She however was mistaken, the daughter had heard the thieves, had risen, slipped on a night-dress, and stealing into another room, gave the alarm, by which the thieves were secured.

Another of a bigotted old lady, who seeing thieves enter her apartment with lights, at midnight, exclaimed to her maid who lay in the

[1] Corroborated by "London Library."

same room, "Lie still Betty, for now we shall see the salvation of the Lord!" imagining it was a celestial apparition. The thieves however, were driven away by the fury of a poor man, maintained out of charity, who was half an idiot; and who, after the exploit, was made drunk every day, when he went to Plymouth, with drams given him by people, who bribed him to tell the story.

A third, of a gentleman, that having put out his candle, going to bed, read in blazing characters on his curtains, "Confess thy sins, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." On which the gentleman fell on his knees and, as directed, began to confess his sins aloud: not from terror, but aware it was a trick, meant to terrify him, by a waggish young lady; and hearing a little bustle on the stair-head, truly supposed that she, and others, were there listening. He confessed as the last and greatest of his sins, that he had seduced the young lady; and, if that might be pardoned him, he would never again be so heinously guilty. The joke was understood, and of course, the lady laughed at, instead of the gentleman.

A fourth, of a cook-maid left alone in a country-house, which was attacked by several thieves on the night when she was sitting up, waiting the arrival of the family. The detail of this story *Northcote*,[1] who told it, did not know, except that the fears and courage of the girl being inflamed, finding them to be thieves, and that

[1] "London Library."

they were making their way, by widening the aperture of the kitchen gutter, she took up a cleaver, and killed the first man that was creeping forward, then dragged the body away, imitated his voice, encouraged a second one to come in, killed him, and thus destroyed them all; after which, growing frantic, she lighted up every room, smeared herself with blood, brandished her dreadful weapon, and was found marching about the house, and to and from the dead bodies, by the family, who coming home in the middle of the night, were amazed at the lights from the windows first, and much more afterwards, when they beheld the scene within.

I am here reminded of a tragical story told me by the late Mrs. P——, with the hero of which she was personally acquainted, having, while a child, seen him daily. One Alexander —— of Aberdeen, had seduced a pretty girl, who was pregnant by him. This girl, and one or two others, had risen at two o'clock to wash. While they were at their work, a whistle was heard, and the girl said "that is Sandy, I will go and speak to him." She said this with a kind of wildness and terror in her look, and was persuaded not to go: but she said she must and would, come of it what might, as if herself foreboding some ill. She could not be withheld; but going, said, perhaps she would soon be back. The night passed away, however, and instead of returning, if I remember rightly, she was never seen more: though her lover remained for some time in the place, till suspicion became so loud,

that he thought proper to go abroad: for there was no proof to detain him, as no one could swear to a whistle, or knew what was become of the girl. After a lapse of years, he returned rich, but always deeply melancholy, and loving to be alone. This behaviour revived the memory of past events, and he was universally shunned, except by children, to whom he was particularly kind, and who therefore frequently played with him, and partook of the good things he gave them.

Discoursing at Opie's on the effects of terror, Northcote related, that two of his brothers were sitting by the fire, and as one of them slept, the other, by way of experiment, when he saw him about to wake, sat motionless, without appearing to breathe, and his eyes fixed on one object. The brother who had been asleep, watched him as long as his patience could hold, and then spoke, but received no answer. He spoke again and again, but still the same fixed, motionless, and as he began to dread, lifeless figure, sat before him. He was not a timid man, and the absurd joke ended without any bad consequences. But the picture which he afterwards gave of his own terror, was a strong one. *Northcote* also told the following story. A gentleman, followed by a servant in livery, rode into an inn in the West of England, one evening a little before dusk. He told the landlord that he should be detained by business in that part of the country for a few days, and wished to know if there were any amusements going on in the town to fill up the intervals of his time. The landlord replied, that

it was their race and assize week, and that he would therefore be at no loss to pass away the time. On the gentleman's making answer, that this was lucky, for that he was fond of seeing trials, the other said, that a very interesting trial for a robbery would come on the next day, on which people's opinions were much divided, the evidence being very strong against the prisoner; but he himself persisting resolutely in declaring that he was in a distant part of the kingdom at the time the robbery was committed. His guest manifested considerable curiosity to hear the trial; but as the court would probably be crowded, expressed some doubt of getting a place. The landlord told him, that there could be no difficulty in a gentleman of his appearance getting a place; but that, to prevent any accident, he would himself go with him, and speak to one of the beadles. Accordingly they went into court the next morning, and the gentleman was shewn to a seat on the bench. Presently after, the trial began. While the evidence was giving against him, the prisoner had remained with his eyes fixed on the ground, seemingly very much depressed; till being called on for his defence, he looked up, and seeing the stranger, he suddenly fainted away. This excited some surprise, and it seemed at first like a trick to gain time. As soon as he came to himself, on being asked by the judge the cause of his behaviour, he said, Oh, my lord, I see a person that can save my life; that gentleman (pointing to the stranger) can prove I am innocent, might I only

have leave to put a few questions to him. The eyes of the whole court were now turned on the gentleman, who said he felt himself in a very awkward situation to be so called upon, as did not remember ever to have seen the man before, but that he would answer any question that was asked him. Well then, said the man, don't you remember landing at Dover at such a time? To this the gentleman answered, that he had landed at Dover, not long before, but that he could not tell whether it was on the day he mentioned or not. Well, said he, but don't you recollect that a person in a blue jacket and trowsers carried your trunk to the inn? To this he answered, that of course some person had carried his trunk for him; but that he did not know what dress he wore. But, said the prisoner, don't you remember that the person, who went with you from the boat, told you a story of his being in the service, that he thought himself an ill-used man, and that he shewed you a scar he had on one side of his forehead? During this last question, the countenance of the stranger underwent a considerable change, he said he certainly did recollect such a circumstance, and on the man's putting his hair aside, and shewing the scar, he became quite sure that he was the same person. A buzz of satisfaction now ran through the court, for the day on which, according to the prisoner's account, this gentleman had met with him at Dover, was the same on which he was charged with the robbery in a remote county. The stranger however could not be

certain of the time, but said that he sometimes made memorandums of dates in his pocket-book, and might possibly have done so on this occasion. On turning to his pocket-book, he found a memorandum of the time he landed from Calais, which corresponded with the prisoner's assertion. This being the only circumstance necessary to prove the alibi, the prisoner was immediately acquitted, amidst the applause and congratulations of the whole court.—Within less than a month after this, the gentleman who came to the Inn, attended by a servant in livery, the servant who followed him, and the prisoner who had been acquitted, were all three brought back to the same gaol, for robbing the mail.

14*th*.—The assassination of Buonaparte, the subject at Debrett's.

15*th*.—Met Arthur B*eddoes*,[1] who disbelieves the assassination of Buonaparte. It was much questioned at Debrett's. T*arleton*[2] loud, in asserting it was impossible that a general officer, surrounded by his staff, should be massacred. Tarleton already imagines himself and his staff, in P*aris*. B*eddoes* remarked to me on the triumphant tone of the ministry, and their creatures, in announcing this intelligence. It is true enough, but party spirit never yet had understanding.

16*th*.—Walked with Tobin into the Park. Met various persons; among others, S*mith*,[3] the surgeon, as flighty and whimsical as usual. He

[1] "London Library." [2] Cf. p. 189.
[3] "London Library."

walked with us; dropped us; then came up again; met another acquaintance, stopped with him, was presently with us again; and after first saying I was a deep observer of men and manners, asked me of what profession was the man he met. I had scarcely seen the man's face, and, cutting Addison's joke, desired him to give me the red hot poker out of his pocket, that I might swallow it as a first proof of my skill. He then said the man was a dentist. I replied, I was about to guess he was a Doctor, and should have been tolerably near the mark. Tobin tells me Doctor Beddoes is again going to lecture at Bristol on health and its preservation, that he hates physicians, that physicians hate him, and that he wishes to teach each man to be the guardian of his own health. Thomas Wedgewood, Tobin says, is so afflicted with bad digestion, that he is obliged to take several hours' strong exercise every day. Shooting and turning are part of his amusements. Metaphysics, the study he most delighted in. I told Tobin I wished for a school of health, one principal branch of which should be exercise, and its proper direction, tending to move the limbs and muscles in all modes, by running, stooping, &c., and that social games, which should powerfully stimulate, ought to be practised; bowls, trap-ball, &c., in fine weather. Billiards, marbles, and whatever would engage the attention, and give variety of action, should be studied. I mentioned the above as those that first occurred to the memory. Parkinson, jun., a good mineralogist. His father

was offered twelve thousand pounds, and the title of Baron for his son, by a German Prince (of Hesse, I believe), for the Leverian Museum. It is intended to remove this museum into Bond-street, make scientific arrangements, &c., and exhibit it at half-a-crown, or by annual tickets. At present it does not quite pay the interest of the money. Parkinson, sen., a lawyer, acting chiefly as steward to various persons. Much talk with Tobin, concerning some manuscript pieces written by his brother, and not a little praised by him. Stoddart and Clementi to dinner. Read a scene from Lillo's "Fatal Curiosity" to them. Agnes and Wilmot concerting the murder. Critical remarks by S*toddart* on the language. Called on N*icholson*,[1] who mentioned an attack made on him by T*illock*,[2] editor of a magazine, meant to rival his Journal. The attack ignorant and artful. I advised either a perfectly good-tempered reply, or silence.

17*th*.—Walked to Westminster, to inquire concerning the picture of Angelica and Medora, but could not find Mr. Bates. Unexpectedly met Colonel Barry at Debrett's, just come to town. Lord Wycombe, speaking of Lord Cornwallis, says, "no man is more open in discussing any question, political, or appertaining to government, except such as relate immediately to his own office, and then, no man more close." G*regory* [3] related of one B*artlett*,[4] a gambler and

[1] See above, *Journal of Chemistry, Natural Science, &c.* [2] "London Library." [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

famous billiard-player, that he was now in total discredit, after having lived in a very high style; to support which, he had been guilty of many notorious gambling frauds. He and one Captain —— met one evening at billiards, and played a long rubber for 50*l*., which B*artlett* easily won. The Captain said he had no more money then, but would come the next night, and play him for his own sum, for he was still convinced he was the better player. The appointment was made, and all the gamblers and sporting people, who heard of it, flocked to the place. Bets to a large amount were laid every game; the Captain won, and emptied most of the spectators' pockets: but the match was not finished, for he and B*artlett* quarrelled, abused each other in very gross language, pretended to strike at each other with their cues, but avoided the bowls by dodging, and separated in an apparently extreme heat. A person, however, who had been betting, happening to pass toward Berkeley-square, saw B*artlett* and the Captain, under the wall of Lansdown House, dividing the bank-notes and money of which they had robbed the bettors. B*artlett* was dealer to one ——, who kept a faro table; and three nights successively, a man came in towards the close of the play, staked a large sum on the card, and won it, to the total amount of two thousand pounds. He made a fourth attempt, but was refused by the table-keeper. B*artlett* was suspected, and discharged; and was soon after seen dining at the tavern on Richmond-Hill, with the man who had won the two

thousand pounds. Gamblers speak with most acrimonious rancour against those of their own set who betray them. They delight in conspiring against all the world besides: but bestow the epithets, thief, robber, rascal, &c. most plentifully when betrayed by one of themselves.

18*th.*—Conversed with E*ste*[1] at Debrett's concerning *Lacy*,[2] who was left joint patentee at Drury-Lane theatre, with landed property, houses, &c. of twelve hundred a year, or more. Married a green woman's daughter because she was tall; himself above six feet: and, in a very short time, was little better than a beggar; yet never made any figure, even as a spendthrift. He had last night a benefit at the little theatre in the Haymarket, a poor house.

19*th.*—Breton at Debrett's, spoke of the tricks of Smithfield salesmen. He sent thirty head of cattle to market, came himself, unknown to the salesman, and watched his proceedings; a number, twelve I think, of bad cows were added to his thirty fat bullocks; the whole sold together, and he paid the average price; but made the salesman refund. Farmers are not allowed to sell for themselves, they must employ salesmen.

20*th.*—Mr. H*are*[3] observed, that the ship, Orient, had been the evil genius of the squadron of Brueys. It had prevented the going into the inner harbour. It would not suffer the squadron

[1] "London Library."
[2] Facts corroborated by "London Library."
[3] "London Library."

to anchor in very shallow water, and by blowing up in the battle did every kind of mischief.

21*st*.—Conversed with Erskine, Sir Francis Burdett, R. Adair, Courtney, Este, and Weld. Erskine of opinion it was wrong to give up agitating the question of reform without doors, i.e. out of the House of Commons. He had before remarked that the people had lost all spirit, which I denied, and, on this occasion, reminded him that the leaders of the people had abandoned them in a cowardly manner, and then had called the people cowards. Sir Francis Burdett is inquiring into the number of persons imprisoned on suspicion, and their treatment, meaning to state the particulars to Parliament. Erskine, as a lawyer, has great talents, quick conceptions, acute feelings, and uncommon power over juries; but as a man of grand plans, and inflexible principles, he is far from ranking in the first class. I this day completed my 53rd year.

23*d*.—Called on Sir William Beechey, who has lately given a delicacy of tint and reflected lights to the shaded side of his faces, which I think admirable; and, as far as my knowledge goes, peculiar to himself. He related the following anecdote of Serres, the ship painter. Serres took a picture or pictures of shipping, from England to the King of France, painted to commemorate some naval exploit of the French, and invited connoisseurs and artists to see his performance. Among the rest was the famous Vernet. Serres waited some time after Vernet had looked at the picture, till he became impatient to hear his

opinion, hoping for praise, and fearing lest it should not be bestowed. "How do you like my picture," said he, "Mr. Vernet?" "Upon my word, Sir," replied Vernet, "you paint ropes exceedingly well." Nothing could be more satirical, or better mark the genius of the two men, than this reply. Vernet, like a man of genius, painted nature at large, and suggested her minutiæ, but never gave them in detail. Serres was incapable of any thing but detail, in which he was uncommonly accurate. Serres thought he revenged himself on Vernet, by damning him for a fool, that had never known how to paint a ship, which, in his sense, was true enough. He could not paint every shroud, rope, and tackle, &c. all which Serres had laboriously studied.

24*th.*—Mr. *St. John*[1] M.P. related an incredible anecdote of the Prince of Sicily; the present prince royal, if I do not mistake: that, being betrothed to an archduchess of Austria and, as they could not meet, Germany, &c. being overrun by the French, being married by proxy, eight months after the marriage, he ordered his attendants to provide child-bed linen; supposing she must be brought to bed in a month, though he had never seen her. I said it was incredible, and he answered it was seriously asserted as a fact.

25*th.*—Mr. *Clementi*[2] surprised me much by a

[1] "London Library."

[2] "London Library." Cf. Vol. II, pp. 247–8, and Vol. I, p. 152. S. T. Williams, p. 260 of his *Richard Cumberland* (New Haven, 1917), says this was Cumberland, which I doubt.

very liberal and friendly offer of the loan of two or three hundred pounds; thinking it might be want of money that induced me to sell my effects and go abroad. I answered, one motive was, that of being already in debt to persons who never reminded me of it, which I could endure no longer, much less to incur fresh obligations of the same kind; but that his offer was a strong testimony of the goodness of his own heart. That I was likewise desirous of familiarizing myself and my daughter, with the true idiom of foreign languages, and the manners of the people; also of reducing my expenses, and of absenting myself till certain prejudices in the public mind, respecting me, should subside.

26th.—Sent the three first acts of the "Lawyer" to Mr. Harris. Walked with *Bonner* [1] to see *Perry*,[2] whose hands are excessively burned by extinguishing fire, which had caught his wife's clothes, and must certainly have burned her to death. His resolution was considerable. When the wife of *Bonner* was sitting for her picture, *Beechey* [3] related the following anecdote. At the time of the last procession, he was painting *King George*, who asked if he intended to see the sight. *Beechey* answered in the affirmative. "It will be very fine, *Beechey*, very fine." The day after, when sitting, he again said, "Well, *Beechey*, did you see the procession, *Beechey?*" The painter answered he had. "How did you like it, *Beechey?* How did you like it?"

[1] "London Library." [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid*

"Exceedingly." "Had you a good sight, *Beechey?*" "A very good one. I saw it from a one pair of stairs, on the top of Ludgate Hill." "That must have been very fine, very fine indeed, *Beechey*. I wish I had been in your place. I should like to have seen it myself. But I could see nothing but the back of the coachman." Went to "the Jew and the Doctor" in the evening, which is a tolerably good farce.

27*th*.—Mr. —— at Debrett's, wished the Orange men of Ireland might raise another rebellion, and be all cut off and totally destroyed. Such is the miserably vicious state of the minds of the two opposite parties. Nothing will satisfy either, but the extirpation and blood of their opponents. Dined with Mr. F*oulkes*.[1] A Mrs. Remorande came to consult him on law business. Her husband, an Irish officer, in the French service was guillotined by Robespierre; and she, finding means to secrete five hundred pounds, remitted the money to England. The person afterwards refused payment. She employed an attorney, and was told by another, one M*arriot*,[2] the first intended to cheat her; and prevailed on her to let him continue the suit. She complied, and he soon obtained the money; but, instead of receiving it, as she expected, an information was laid against her, and she was taken on suspicion before the Duke of Portland. Her story being heard, the villainous artifice of M*arriot* was seen through, and she was released.

[1] "London Library." [2] *Ibid.*

He used fresh endeavours, and she was taken before the Westminster justices; but again set free. M*arriot* had given instructions, in his own hand-writing, to his servant, how to proceed in accusing her. These were obtained: he was prosecuted, and promised, if they would stop proceedings, the money should be repaid. Her counsel incautiously took his word; and as it was dropped, he was no longer in danger, and mocked their credulity. He was arrested, however, for the debt, and put in the Fleet prison, where he now lies. This woman's story in France was still more remarkable. The outlines of it were these. The papers announcing her husband's death had arrived, and the tragedy was generally known to the inhabitants of St. Omer's, but not to her. The people around her were afraid to tell her of it. She is a woman of quick faculties, observed something remarkably unusual, gloomy, and strange in their countenances, and could not conceive the reason. One of them advised her to go to the play, because she was in need of amusement. This ridiculous advice she innocently followed; and her acquaintance at the play were so astonished at the indecency of such conduct, that she came away uncommonly agitated by behaviour she thought so affronting. Still she found the same mournful faces, and at last conjured some of them in God's name, to tell her what was the matter. One advised her, if she had any property, to secure it, for she was in danger. This alarmed her suspicions concerning the true cause, and

they were confirmed by another, who answered her next question, by replying, "*il est parti*, he is gone." The famous tyrant, Le Bon, soon afterward came to Saint Omer's. Her person was seized; her property confiscated; her two children were torn from her; and she was ordered to prison. In the delirium of her distress, she braved this demon, called him *Scelerat*, and said, though he aimed at her life, she should live to see him cut off for his crimes. She was removed, however, to Amiens, among persons who were soon to be sacrificed, and her hair was shorn for that purpose. But at this period, Robespierre himself fell; she escaped; and, by an odd coincidence of circumstances, when Le Bon was on his trial, she happened to come to the town where he was tried, went to the court to see the man who had done her so much mischief, and entered it (he being on his defence) at the moment he was describing the fury with which she had resisted what he called the execution of the law. She instantly mounted on a seat; shewed herself to the court; and called, in the most impressive manner, to be heard. The judge was proceeding to commit her for disturbing the proceedings, till she announced her name, and the court then listened to her with the utmost attention. The impression she made was so great, that Le Bon sunk dejected, and offered no further defence to that charge. She supposes him to have been a man as extraordinary for his abilities, as for his cruelty and rapaciousness. Mr. Martinet, an emigrant, came to tea.

In one respect, his was a similar story. He had taught French, with great reputation, in the university of Cambridge, where he had never agitated or concerned himself with political questions, yet an information being laid against him, he was ordered out of the kingdom. In consequence of letters written by noblemen, divines, and respectable men of all parties, this order was revoked; but he is not permitted to teach in Cambridge, consequently he has lost an income, which he had established by his abilities, of between one and two hundred a year.

28*th*.—Met Sir L*ionel* C*opley* [1] at Debrett's, and spoke to him to recommend N*icholson's* [2] academy. Was pleased with Pulteney's speech against the Income bill. Mr. G. Dyer drank tea with us, and told me of poems well written by Lord Holland. Imitations of Juvenal, one of them called Secession, in praise of his uncle, Charles Fox. B*ezeley* [3] asserted two people had perished by the frost in the prison, nick-named the Bastille. Sir L*ionel* C*opley* agreed with me in disapproving Tierney's motion against the Editor of the Times.

29*th*.—Letter from Harris refusing to accept bills for me. Wrote in answer. Informed Courtney of B*ezeley*'s story; he had heard it of one person starved, but with aggravating circumstances that render it incredible.

[1] "London Library."
[2] "London Library" is again in accord with the facts.
[3] "London Library."

30*th.*—Met Tierney coming from the park, and Tobin, jun.

31*st.*—Letter from Harris. Spoke to Lord Holland,[1] requesting him to promote Mr. N*icholson's* plan for an intended academy, which he promised to do.

1799.

January 1*st.*—Lord Wycombe at Debrett's. Conversed with him yesterday on the Orleans gallery; and with Courtney on the subject of solitary confinement. Northcote present. Conversation chiefly on the perfectibility of man, Shakspeare, and painting.

2*d.*—Mr. Harris called, and proposes to put the comedy in rehearsal nearly as soon as it is finished. Contended with Lord H*olland* at Debrett's, against precedents, and in favour of the patriotism of the people; which points he did not obstinately maintain. Spoke with P*erry* [2] on the subject of the "Lawyer." Every body speaks ill of Boaden's play, Aurelio and Miranda, first performed on Saturday, the 29th ult. at Drury Lane Theatre. Dined with Tobin in Barnard's Inn, No. 7, his brother, Mr. W*hite*,[3] and E*lwyn*.[4] The discourse on Christianity, causation, &c. and politics. T*obin* one of those who defend the present tyranny of the French

[1] Henry Richard Vassall Fox, 3rd Lord Holland (1773–1840). The "academy" was a short-lived venture at keeping school, which Wm. Nicholson attempted at this time.

[2] "London Library." [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

Government; from the enthusiasm with which they admired the late struggles of the nation for freedom.[1]

3*d*.—Mr. C*lementi* brought me a hundred pounds as a loan. Seems very desirous I should not quit the kingdom. Accepted a draft for ninety pounds, at two months, drawn by Birch, for a Teniers and other pictures. Had a dispute with Weld concerning the frost of 1789 and that of 1795. I was wrong. Weld jocularly accused me of the trouble I took to have myself hanged; alluding to my surrendering myself when indicted for high-treason, though my prosecutors seemed unwilling to take me into custody.

4*th*.—Mr. Martinet, a French emigrant, called for the first time, the gentleman mentioned on the 27th ult. Billiards with a stranger. One G*regory* was at play in the morning, with a youth of the name of Frazer, and played barefacedly ill, to encourage him, meaning no doubt to lead him on and plunder him.

5*th*.—E*rskine* at Debrett's. He used to be stiff and distant with me, he now seems to make it a point of being familiar. A great, and not an ill talker, little depth of thought, but much florid description. Sometimes with a happy poetic word. Weld, in conversation with me, gave a high character of Lord H*olland*, in which, I think, there was little, if any exaggeration. His speech to the Lords against the suspension of the Habeas Corpus, as reported by the news-

[1] Cf. pp. 215 ff. Corroborated by "London Library."

papers, has great and solid merit. His delivery, I fear, is not very impressive. I likewise fear he has not sufficient vehemence of feeling to become a man of genius. *Gregory* [1] has again been at play with young Frazer, and to-day thought proper to win a few games. The match is to be continued on Monday.

6*th*.—After writing the last, and chief scene in my comedy, yesterday and this morning, part of it from notes, but chiefly the labour of the two days, I walked with Fanny, and Louisa Mercier, into the park, where, though it was a quick thaw, numbers were skaiting; and had the day been clear, the morning picture would have been amusing. Met General *Maitland*,[2] had a salute; a nod from Lord R. *Spencer* [3] on horseback.

7*th*.—Again transcribed, with additions and corrections, the last scene. Lord Holland, General Maitland, Mr. Weld, Mr. Hare, the Duke of Bedford, &c. at Debrett's. The hardships of the income bill discussed.

8*th*.—Wrote the first scene of the fifth act, the substance of which I had in my memory; and had the whole act transcribed, and the comedy sent to Mr. Harris. Saw *Perry* [4] at Debrett's, and spoke to him of my intended Epilogue.

9*th*.—Harris called about three o'clock, much satisfied with the comedy, but advising some curtailments and slight alterations.

[1] "London Library."
[2] Cf. next day. Corroborated by "London Library."
[3] "London Library." [4] *Ibid.*

10*th*.—Wrote to Harris concerning the proposed alterations.

11*th*.—Made alterations in the Tradesman-scene, and returned the comedy to Harris, that Lewis might read Headlong before I curtail the Bailiff-scene in the third act. [This comedy came out at Drury Lane (much altered) in 1803, ran eleven nights, ill performed, and entitled, "Hear both Sides," June, 1808.]

12*th*.—Went with Fanny and Louisa to Holman's new comedy, first time, "The Votary of Wealth," a piece in which there is much to blame, and but little to commend.[1] Heard Mrs. Atkins in the first act of Rosina. M. Le T*exier*[2] and his wife in the same box; he pretended to regret we each had visited when the other was not at home, and to wish a more intimate acquaintance, but I doubt his sincerity. He is a man of the world, and his world has not been of the purest kind.

13*th*.—Called on *Perry*,[3] who read me quotations made by Belsham from Davenant,[4] something like miraculously picturing the political state and government of the kingdom, though

[1] *The Votary of Wealth* (1799), by J. G. Holman, was fairly successful and enjoyed the distinction of further editions in the first year of its printing, including two separate piracies at Dublin.

[2] So "London Library"; original is "F——."

[3] "London Library."

[4] Charles Davenant (1656–1714), eldest son of Sir William Davenant, the poet and dramatist. He wrote several large volumes on political economy.

written, I believe, at the beginning of this century. Left the manuscript of "the Lawyer" with him to read. Called on M. Martinet—not at home, and on Mr. Nicholson. Mr. Godwin brought my manuscript with further remarks, of the same temper and complexion as his first: on which subject, as nearly as I can recollect, we had the following conversation.—H. "The first part of your criticism, which I have read, has, I own, both pained and surprised me. When you brought your tragedy to me, you gave a minute detail of the rules I was to observe in criticising your work, that you might properly benefit by my remarks, which rules you have not yourself in the least attended to. One of the first of them was, not to find fault in such an absolute and wholesale style, as might at once kill your ardour, and make you, if not disgusted with your work, yet so doubtful, as at once to damp all farther progress. Yet, having read mine, you come with a sledge hammer of criticism, describe it as absolutely contemptible, tell me it must be damned, or, if it should escape, that it cannot survive five nights, that the characters and plot are but transcripts of myself, and that every body will say it is the garrulity of an old man. I am well aware that the judgment of an author, on a work of his own, which he has lately finished, is extremely fallible; but a judgment he has, and must have, and I am firmly persuaded that this comedy (meaning 'the Lawyer') contains some of the strongest writing I have ever produced, and I

stake my judgment, as far as the judgment of an author, under the circumstances I have described, can be staked, that instead of being damned, it will meet with no inconsiderable applause."—G. "I thought it my duty to speak my thoughts plainly. The opinion I have delivered, I delivered coolly, after due reflection, and I was desirous you should understand perfectly what my feelings were. My language was unqualified, but there is this distinction between my critique and yours, of which I complained. I have used no triumphing banter, which you did."—H. "Not in that part of my remarks which was general; nor ever, but when I supposed it would make you more clearly perceive the defect which I wished you to amend, than any other method I could take."—G. "There is another difference between us. Though I certainly give myself credit for intellectual powers, yet I have a failing which I have never been able to overcome. I am so cowed and cast down by rude and unqualified assault, that for a time I am unable to recover. You, on the contrary, I consider as a man of iron."—H. "It is true, I have been so hardened in sufferance, by the difficulties I have had to overcome, that when such attacks are made upon me, I think I may say, however egotistical it may sound, I can, in the language of Shakspear, shake them from me 'as the lion shakes the dewdrops from his mane.' Yet if you imagine that sensibility is destroyed in me, the mistake is strange and unaccountable, considering how well you know me. On the present

occasion, I lay wakeful and ruminating full three hours on the injustice and wrong nature of your remarks. At length I recollected the folly of such uneasiness, created chiefly by the pain it gave me to think you could act so improperly, and I then recounted to myself your great virtues, and how very trifling such blemishes are, when placed in comparison with them. This, as it ought, acted like a charm, and almost immediately calmed my perturbation. But it is right I should inform you, I had this perturbation; and that though I can overcome feeling, it is still as quick and vigorous as ever." We then walked, and conversed on other subjects till dinner-time.

14*th*.—Enquired of King, auctioneer, his terms of selling books: they are ten per cent. not including ten-pence in the pound King's taxes, but all other expenses, except that of conveying them to the auction-room. Lord Wycombe at Debrett's; read to me the strange account inserted in the Times of to-day, of Lord Camelford's attempt to go over to France; and commented on the pretended purity of ministers, who have lately conferred the command of a ship (a frigate as I recollect) on this madman.[1] L*ouisa*[2] related to me a whimsical story of a physician, who one night hearing lamentable

[1] Thomas Pitt, 2nd Baron Camelford, who tried to do spy service in France, posing as a Revolutionary sympathizer, but was caught and punished by the British Government.

[2] "London Library."

groans and cries, went to search whence they proceeded, found a man and woman, drunk, thrown out of an overturned cart, hastened to a public house to get aid, and in his care had them put to bed together, but returning the next morning, found the man in a rage at having slept with such a companion; and the woman making an intolerable uproar, weeping, and reproaching, asserting that her character was ruined, and that he must and should marry her; which accordingly the good-natured fool was persuaded to do. Called on Christie, his terms for pictures are seven and a half per cent., all expenses whatever included.

15*th.*—Met Mr. P*erry* [1] at Phillips's auction-rooms. Thinks highly of "the Lawyer." Suggested an alteration that should omit the Bailiff in the fourth act. Will consider it. Conversed with Lord Wycombe at Debrett's.

16*th.*—Mr. Harris called, advised alterations in "The Lawyer," which I expect will be essential. His ideas, though crude, have awakened reflection. He promised to put no other comedy in rehearsal, till he had my answer within a fortnight.

17*th.*—Made notes for altering the character of Sir Ralph. Lord Wycombe, Marquis of Townsend, Rans, &c., at Debrett's. Read the three last acts of "the Lawyer" to Louisa and Fanny; their feelings were strong, yet from their variations I could discover some defects. Reading such manuscripts is a good experiment.

[1] "London Library."

18*th.*—Account in to-day's Morning Chronicle of the Norwegian that died at 160, enjoying his faculties to the last. His name, I think, Surrington. Girton, a landscape designer, looked at my pictures, and praised them highly.[1] After the Wilsons, his attention was most deeply attracted by the landscape by Artois.

19*th.*—Barry, the painter, R. A. spent the evening with us. His conversation as usual rapturous in praise of the arts. Speaks, and, I believe, thinks highly of Fanny's attempts at drawing; not of her knowledge or execution, but of her feeling for character and beauty. Saw Mr. Wheeler going to Fulham, who was astonished and rejoiced, having supposed me dead. Asked me to dine with him in the country.

20*th.*—Received a begging letter from a person, signing himself J. K[*Day*],[2] the chief features of which are ignorance and servility. I thought it my duty to refuse his request. I learn M*ackintosh*[3] intends to read lectures on law; in which political government is to be introduced, and the established systems of this country highly praised. Expressed the pain I felt, that a man of such superior powers should act so false a part, and so contrary to his convictions, of which I must, in all human probability, be able to form a tolerably accurate opinion, from the many conversations I have had with him. His

[1] Thomas Girtin (1773–1802), water-colour painter, of whom Turner said: "Had Tom Girtin lived, I should have starved."

[2] "London Library." [3] *Ibid.*

judgment was (and, doubtless, still is, for his faculties are in their full vigour) so clear, his perceptions so penetrating, and his opinions so decided, that I can conceive no possibility of their being so totally changed. Read Dryden's Translation, Ode 29., B. 1., of Horace; part of Macflecnoe, and his verses on young statesmen, 1680; aloud.

21st.—Report at Debrett's, that Paul Benfield is ruined. Was told he went out to India a carpenter, got employment as a builder, learned the art of making money breed, and came home worth 300,000*l.*

22nd.—The union of Ireland is now the whole subject of political discourse. Ministry seems determined, and their opponents hope, though faintly, it may put an end to their power.

23rd.—Met Sir *F. Bourgeois* [1] in Bond-street, who reminded me of my promise; then *General Hastings*,[2] who would not see me, ('tis the fashion of these folks to those they think their inferiors), and afterwards C. Grey, M. P., who was less aristocratic, and gave me a nod. Lord *Stanhope*'s [3] Address in the Chronicle and Post.[4] *Tierney* [5] calls him mad. I expressed a different opinion

[1] "London Library." [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

[4] Charles, 3rd Earl of Stonbridge (1755–1816), of revolutionary sympathies, issued an "Address to the Nations of Great Britain and Ireland" against the proposed Union.—W.-G. Cf. note to p. 62. It was at his house that Jeremiah Joyce, tutor to his sons, was arrested in 1794 on the same high-treason indictment with Holcroft. [5] "London Library."

to Weld, who agreed, and said there was method in his madness.

24th.—Met General H*astings* again. He spoke to me, for it was not in Bond-street, and his pride had no alarms. Such pride is pitiable, and excites to resentment, but to resent would be equally weak.

25*th*.—At Debrett's. General H*astings* described the black chief of St. Domingo, Toussaint, after General Maitland. He is a little man, about fifty, toothless, lively of temper, and ambitious.

26*th*.—Call from Watts; another from Tobin, who had lent me the Sorcerer, translated from Veil Weber. He and his brother praised it as the first production in the world. I told him, I think the author a man of genius, but that his book is written in a taste no less disgusting than immoral, besides being deficient in several of the essential parts of composition, as, a choice of subject, conduct of the fable, probability, &c. Attwood came and told me the performers gave high applause at the reading of "the Old Clothesman." Met Knight, who is to play Florid, and who wanted to tell me it as a secret, which I refused to hear.[1] Dibdin, comedian, and author of the Jew and the Doctor, was with him. I like him, because he spoke so earnestly in praise of

[1] Thomas Knight, the actor. The *Reminiscences of Thomas Dibdin*, 1: 247, 249, speak of "the great good will" of Holcroft to Dibdin, and say that Knight walked away, wishing not to be seen with a man of Holcroft's notorious political principles.

the virtuous principles of his brother. They are illegitimate sons of Dibdin, the musical composer, whose conduct towards them is highly reprehensible. The young man said he had seen his father so seldom, that, having weak eyes, he should not know him if he met him in the street. I invited him to my house. The news at Debrett's was the failure in the Irish Parliament, of the attempt at a union; and not only there, but in the streets, it was the subject of general conversation. All whom I heard mention it, rejoiced. Naples, they say, is in the possession of the French. The king, having fled with eight thousand troops to Sicily, after twenty thousand others had laid down their arms to eight thousand French. The substance of this I suppose to be true.

28*th.*—Finished the alterations in my comedy. Debrett's full. The conduct of the Irish parliament relating to the union, the whole subject of political conversation. Read a criticism in *La Decade Philosophique*, No. 8. An. 7,—on a French translation of Hugh Trevor, containing great praise, and some pointed blame. The chief articles of the latter are,—that the plan proposed is incomplete (true), that some of the conversations are too long (true), that my satire on professions is unfounded (false), that I have not put my morality sufficiently in action (false again, the law part excepted), that probability is not quite enough regarded (perhaps not), and that, to make Trevor so suddenly a wealthy man is entirely in the novel style (true; blamable).

The following are the concluding remarks: "Malgré ces défauts qu'on peut reprocher, comme nous l'avons vu, à beaucoup de romans, mêmes très-estimés, celue-ci mérite assurément d'être distingué par la justesse des observations, la vérité des tableaux et des caractères, le naturel du dialogue, la peinture exacte des mœurs et des ridicules. En un mot, c'est l'ouvrage d'un penseur, d'un homme de talent, d'un observateur habile et exercisé, d'un ami des mœurs, et de la vertu; disons encore d'un écrivain patriote, hardi défenseur des droits sacrés du peuple, et de telles productions sont toujours faites pour être bien accueillies."

29*th*.—Called on Opie; saw a portrait, whole length, of a lady, excellent.[1] News of a second defeat of government in Ireland, 109 to 104 against the union. Pitt, in answer to Sheridan, on the debate here on that subject, said, Sheridan seemed determined to have the last word; to which Sheridan replied, he was satisfied with having the last argument. When Dundas brought the sealed bag, containing the proofs which are to be examined to shew the necessity of a union; Sheridan, seeing there was not much in it, jocularly said to Dundas, "Confess the truth, is there any thing in that bag, except the report the committee are to bring up?" H*are*,[2] M. P. related these as extraordinary witticisms. The one was a ready reply; the other, a sarcastic question, naturally resulting from his knowledge

[1] Lady Price of Cornwall.

[2] "London Library."

of the practices of people in office: nothing more. Sent my comedy to Harris, with a letter. Called on Northcote.

30*th.*—Sat to Mr. Opie, first sitting for my portrait, intended for Colonel Barry. Mr. *Godwin*[1] has a portrait of me painted by Opie, which was exhibited last year, a most admirable painting and likeness. Received a letter from Harris. A very excellent sonnet in to-day's Herald, on Winter.[2] General H*astings* told me, that Burns, who has written a pamphlet on the union, cites an expression, which is become proverbial in Ireland, i.e. "Put an Irishman on the spit, and an Irishman will be found to turn it."

31*st.*—Second sitting to Opie. He related an anecdote of a man in Cornwall, who being half drunk, and near a dreadful precipice, suddenly fell, but happened to catch with his hands; on which he began to pray, in a confused and terrified manner, till he was so exhausted that he could hold no longer, and at last loosed his hold; but scarcely descended a yard, being not quite so far on his road as the precipice; from which, if he had fallen, he must probably have been dashed to pieces. The disappointment must have been an odd sensation. Opie knew the

[1] Corroborated by "London Library." See letters of Wm. Austin, quoted in *Introduction.*

[2] *Morning Herald*, Wed., Jan. 30, 1799, p. 2, col. 4, Sonnet, To Winter (2 verses, 6 and 8 lines), signed "Hyems."

man.—Smith, a painter,[1] told us of his journey over Mount Cenis, when those winter winds characteristically called Tormento, by the Italians, prevailed, which will not let the snow rest till it becomes lodged in cavities, filling them up, and making one even surface, dangerous to the lives of the most experienced guides. *Smith* has been in India, where he was painter to the Mogul; and dignified with a Persian title, appointing him a general, and calling him the Royal Falcon of War, though he was in no other capacity than that of painter; but such cut-throat titles are there the only honourable distinctions, according to him, that are conferred.

February 1st. Dr. *Black* and *Este*[2] loud in praise of Dr. Drennan's pamphlet against Pitt.[3] Third sitting to Opie. Called on Birch, who thinks Phillips gets better prices for pictures than Christie. Mr. and Mrs. Opie, Mr. and Mrs. Perry,[4] Marian, Miss Barkley, daughter of Sir Robert, Northcote, and Sir Francis Bourgeois,[5] in the evening. On the whole a pleasant party.

[1] W.-G. say John Smart (1741–1811), a miniature painter, who was in India for some years between 1788 and 1797. But "London Library" says *Smith*.

[2] "London Library."

[3] William Drennan the elder (1754–1820), M.D., was an Irish political leader. The pamphlet referred to is *A Letter to the Right Honourable W. Pitt (on the proposed Act of Union), Dublin*, 1799.

[4] Cf. pp. 180, 249.

[5] Probably, and not Burdett, at the painters' evening. Corroborated by "London Library."

2*nd*.—Fourth sitting to Opie, a short one, and only for the coat. A report at Debrett's of the massacre of the Neopolitan nobility by the Lazaroni. Conversed with Lord Wycombe on the native ferocity of the Irish. Conjectures run high, that Pitt will breed a serious civil war in that country. Read three acts of my comedy to S*toddart*.[1] It is still capable, and indeed in want of great improvements.

4*th*.—Mr. Harris came by appointment, and we were mutually of opinion farther alterations would greatly improve the comedy. Sale of Stuart, the artist's, pictures at Phillips's rooms.

5*th*.—Este, Dr. Towers, Parry, jun. at Debrett's. Towers, a character worth drawing. Drank tea with P*inkerton*,[2] who wished me to mention manuscript travels written by Brown, to Robinson.

6*th*.—The foot walk in Hyde Park one sheet of ice, on which, not being aware, had a severe fall. No news at Debrett's. Letter from Knight to Attwood, declining to sing "The Joys of Eating, &c." in the Old Clothesman. Russian leather. Mr. Breton said the report was, that the recent death of the Duke of L*eeds* was occasioned by poison self-administered. This is probably as unfounded as another report, which proves to be false, that Lord C*owper* had lost seventy thousand pounds to the Duke of B*edford*, and had then destroyed himself. Lord C*owper*

[1] "London Library."

[2] "London Library." Pinkerton was interested in such works; see *Collection of Voyages and Travels* (1805–1812).

is alive, and the Duke says he never spoke to him in his life. It is true, indeed, the Duke of L*eeds* had ruined himself by gaming, and had endeavoured to drink away the remembrance of it.[1]

7*th*.—Wrote to Mr. Harris concerning Knight's song, &c. Nothing at Debrett's.

8*th*.—Pitt at present thought insincere for pretending to persist in the measure of a union. List of Wakefield's jury from Mr. Foulkes.

9*th*.—Finished my second alteration of "the Lawyer." Lord D*erby* [2] at Debrett's; of opinion that the union is a dangerous affair to Pitt. The death of Mr. Rans of Moorhall, with whom I had some slight acquaintance, announced in the papers. Bought the Crucifixions, a Caracci, highly finished, at Phillips's, the property of Pugh, a surgeon, who gave eighty pounds, or guineas, for it. A Metzu sold for ninety-six guineas. The subject, a man on horseback, with host and hostess at an alehouse door; bought by a young man, related to Lord Fitzwilliam.

11*th*.—Sent my comedy and a letter to Mr. Harris, stating the price I required. He refused, and immediately returned the comedy. Borrowed and repaid 18*l*. 16*s*. to Mr. Robinson, and 60*l*. for a month, of Mr. *W*. S*toddart*.[3]

12*th*.—Sat to Opie. Wrote to Mr. P*inkerton*,[4] informing him that having seen Mr. Robinson,

[1] These names all corroborated by "London Library." Francis, 5th Duke of Leeds, died Jan. 31, 1797, of a sudden and mysterious illness.

[2] "London Library." [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

would return an answer.[1] Read a manuscript of Mr. Tobin, jun.

13*th.*—Agreed with Mr. Phillips, auctioneer, to sell the whole of my effects at five per cent., including all charges, except that I am to remove books, prints, and pictures to his saleroom at my own expense.[2] Had a second fall on the unthawed snow, by which the spinal bone is so sore I can hardly walk. Phillips, speaking of Count Kelly, characterised him as uncommonly liberal, and a great lover of the arts. Phillips sold his library, and asked permission to introduce some very indifferent books of his own, which he estimated at forty pounds. The Count disliking this, took the books at the estimate, sent them to Stockholm, had a printed catalogue of them, and sold them by auction. This was a thing totally new to the country, and drew numbers of people, some of them from a considerable distance. The books sold for 120*l.* and the Count remitted the money to Phillips.

14*th.*—Wrote Finale and a new song for Incledon, in the Old Clothesman. The dishonourable proceedings of Boyd and Benfield,

[1] Cf. Feb. 5. In 1800 Cadell published *Travels in Africa, Egypt and Syria*, 1797–8, by William George Browne.

[2] Cf. entry under Feb. 26. *The Monthly Mirror* for December, 1799 (8 : 325), says : "About a year ago Mr. Holcroft disposed of his very valuable library, and a fine collection of paintings and drawings, by public auction." Cf. also the two later auction book catalogues, 1802 and 1809, listed in my Bibliography.

the topic of the day.[1] The justification of Boyd, a lame, or rather a condemning tale. Saw P——; informed him of what had passed with Harris.

15*th.*—Sat to Opie.

17*th.*—Messrs. G——, Clementi, Master Field, Mr. and Mrs. Opie, Mr. and Mrs. F*ennier*[2] to dinner. Field played a concerto and other things of his own composition. Is a youth of genius, for which Clementi loves, admires, and instructs him; highly to his own honour.[3]

18*th.*—The opinion that Pitt has again lost a favourable opportunity of treating with France is pretty general.

20*th.*—Sat to Opie. Called on Sharp, and paid him for his print of *The Sortie of Gibraltar*[4]; which he said if I kept would become of great value, for it was the last on such a subject, meaning the destruction of war, that would ever be published. Guessing the reason of this whimsical assertion, I mentioned Brothers, of whom he talked in his usual style. The wisdom of the Creator, had occasioned all our miseries: but the tongue of wisdom was now subdued, meaning Egypt, which was not only a slip of land resembling a tongue, but the place in which the

[1] Cf. p. 236.

[2] Merely a guess; and, it seems, a very probable one.

[3] John Field (1782–1837). After his *debut* as an infant prodigy (he had played at a public concert in 1794 or 1795) he went on a continental tour with Clementi, and finally settled down in Russia, where his music was much appreciated.—W.-G.

[4] "London Library."

learning of the world originated. Thus, by the help of a pun and a metaphor, he had double proof, which he accepts as indubitable. Syria, Palestine, and all these countries are soon to be revolutionized; and those who do not take up arms against their fellow men, are to meet at the Grand Millenium. The earthquake is still to happen, and the peaceable, even if uninspired, are all to be saved. So that I, being one of them, were temples to tumble over my head, should find some miraculous nail or rafter, or something else, equally wonderful, to save me from being crushed. I asked him, as I had formerly done, why the earthquake did not happen at the time positively appointed by Brothers; and he said, that unless I were one of the inspired, it was a thing he could not explain. Last summer he had retired to a lonely place near, or at Kilburn; and there he himself had been absolutely favored with a revelation, communicating to him personally, beyond all doubt, the revolutions that are immediately to happen. He is a worthy and excellent man, and in spite of this insanity, has an acute, strong, and inquiring mind. Notwithstanding my cross-questioning him, he has a strong desire to make a convert of me; and knowing the principles of peaceful benevolence which I hold, has no small hopes of succeeding. He was happy at the idea of having more talk on the subject, though I both plainly and ironically, in conversing with him, treated it as it deserves, except that I forbear as much as I can to wound him. He said he was greatly gratified

that, though I argued against Brothers, I never called him rascally impostor, and other abusive epithets, common in the mouths of his opponents. Laughed with *Este* at Debrett's, at T*opham*'s account some time ago, of the prodigious stone, or rocky fragment, that was rained on his estate. *Este* said, T*opham* was only half mad, and that vanity was the possessing demon.[1]

21*st*.—Sat to Opie. Lord Wycombe brought the report to Debrett's of the loss of the Proserpine frigate, with Mr. Grenville, his suite, and the whole crew. Sent Mrs. —— a one pound note, as a present relief.

22*d*.—Argued at Debrett's against the immorality of invective, for which I consider Mr. *Gilbert* Wakefield as very blamable. Received a note from Mr. *Nicholson*,[2] asking in the name of a friend to admit some pictures in my sale, which I refused, as a public deception, and for other reasons.

25*th*.—Met R. A*dair*,[3] who walked with me up Bond-Street. Disbelieves the loss of Grenville. Fox still determined on retirement. Tobin called, and inquired my thoughts on his brother's manuscript, which I gave him.

26*th*.—Sent the following notice to the Commissioners for the Income Bill. "I have no income; that is, I have neither landed nor personal property, that brings me either rent or

[1] Names from "London Library."
[2] "London Library."
[3] Corroborated by "London Library."

interest. My income has always been the produce of my labour; and that produce has been so reduced, by the animosity of party spirit, that I find myself obliged to sell my effects for the payment of my debts, that I may leave the kingdom till party spirit shall subside." [1]

27*th.*—Sat to Mr. Opie.

28*th.*—Sat to Opie. Sir L*ionel* C*opley* at Debrett's, glad to see me; a man of unaffected manners, no pride, or as little perhaps as a man of wealth and title can have, and with patriotic and benevolent intentions. Lord Wycombe walked with me down Piccadilly, to inquire after my picture of Angelica and Medoro.

March 1*st.*—Sat to Opie. Northcote there, who warmly praised his whole length of Mrs. Price, and his Old Soldier, and Girl with Beer. Phillips came, read the catalogue, and approved my lotting of the pictures. Called and saw his Wouverman's Hawking. Parry, jun., is given to hope for a verdict in his favour, by Erskine.

2*nd.*—Sat to Mr. Opie. Aided to catalogue the German books.[2]

3*rd.*—Louisa and Theresa to breakfast. Spyring to tea. Informed Col. Barry of the business of to-morrow; viz. my marriage with Louisa, and received his hearty congratulations. He had seen my portrait, was highly pleased, and gave Opie a draft on his banker.

5*th.*—Went after breakfast at ten, and sat to Mr. Drummond, Carlisle-street, Soho, at the

[1] Cf. entry under February 13, p. 244. [2] *Ibid.*

request of the proprietors of the Monthly Mirror. Taken in crayons, size of life. A call from P*inkerton*[1]; he told me they (meaning his friend, Mr. Brown, and himself), had closed with Cadell for a thousand guineas, that is, has sold the copyright of Brown's travels into Egypt, Darfoor, &c. for that sum.[2]

6*th*.—Went a second time and sat to Drummond.

8*th*.—Called on Opie; but the morning so clouded after a fall of snow, that it was too dark for him to paint, in the present almost finished state of my portrait.

9*th*.—Sat to Opie. A snowy and very bad day for the picture sale. Difficulties made by *Phillips*,[3] the auctioneer, concerning the prices marked by me, though he had himself required I should mark them. Thirty-seven lots of my pictures bought in.

10*th*.—Mrs. Holcroft visited by Mrs. and Miss B*anks*,[4] Mr. and Mrs. P*erry*,[5] and by Mr. and Mrs. Opie in the evening. Mr. Brown, the traveller, called.

12*th*.—Walked with Louisa in search of lodgings. Mr. B—— to dinner, and accompanied

[1] "London Library."

[2] Cf. entry under Feb. 12, pp. 243–4. Cadell was the publisher.

[3] Cf. Bibliography.

[4] "London Library."

[5] Cf. pp. 180, 241. Corroborated by "London Library."

me, Sophia, and Louisa to the theatre, Drury-lane. The Secret, and Feudal Times, both of them very dull and indifferent."[1]

END OF DIARY

[1] 1799 both plays. By Edward Morris and George Colman, the younger, respectively.

BOOK VI

LETTERS CONCERNING EMIGRATION

Letter I

To a Friend, 1799[1]

You, and many other of my friends, were informed of my motives for quitting my native country, and residing some few years abroad: till more peaceable time should again render that country to me what it once was; admirable for its general industry, manners, and morality; and undisturbed by the suspicions and persecutions, with which other countries were, and too often still continue to be, afflicted. Nothing but the strange terror which had seized the public mind could have engendered that spirit of individual rancour so foreign to the English character, which suddenly spread through the nation; and nothing but the stupor of mind, under such an impulse, could have made me suspected as one of the heads of the abominable Hydra, to extirpate which every Englishman was summoned. The fear was itself ridiculous: but, in their consequences, such fears have been fatal to many a worthy man.

I cannot recollect these things unmoved: neither can I hear various false reports of my being obliged to quit England, and of my not being suffered to return, without wishing that those who give them credit may be undeceived. My departure from England was voluntary; as is my absence. I cannot live in danger

[1] Originally printed at the end of the *Memoirs*, 3: 187–247.

from Laws which I have not violated, or power with which I do not contend. I carefully shun the acrimony of political dispute, and the circles in which it is indulged. To the utmost of the little ability I have, it is my desire to inform, with the hopes of benefiting mankind; and this end cannot be attained by making them angry. In action, heart, and principle, I am, or would become, the friend of man. The only enemy I encounter is error; and that with no weapon but words: my constant theme has been, let it be taught, not whipped.

The letters I mean to address to you are intended for the public; and of these facts I wish the public to be informed and reminded. You must not, therefore, be surprised that I speak of them in this place. Whatever fable may invent, or credulity believe, I pledge my veracity to the world, that what I have above said is literally true: and may the world treat my memory with that ignominy, which a falsehood so solemn and gratuitous would deserve, if I prevaricate.

Avoiding the pursuit of this painful subject, the busy memory recurs to another, equally ungrateful: I did not quit the circle of friends, in whose intercourse I found so much benefit, and took so much delight, but with the bitterness of regret. I could not sit in apathy; and see the few effects I had collected become the scattered prey of brokers and dealers; and chiefly my library, on which so much of my money and time had been bestowed, squandered, twenty and more books in a lot: several of them individually of greater worth than the price paid for the whole. It seemed the dissolution of my social life; and something like the entrance into a wild and savage state. What multitudes of such thoughts did my afflicted heart suffer without

giving them utterance! It would but have communicated and increased affliction.

I wish not to dwell on these dark parts of the picture. Who quits the country of his fathers without a sigh? Yet, who journeys forward to lands unexplored without hopes of strange and unexpected pleasures? It is a season full of apprehensive emotions, flutterings of the heart, and hopes and fears too numerous to be defined. At least it is such to those to whom travelling is not become a habit.

Some people have asked, why are books of travels so much read? It is because they are so often entertaining. Customs, when they differ but little from our own, seldom fail to excite our surprise, our laughter, or our contempt. Without crossing the seas, a man who has the faculty of noticing the remarkable, the whimsical, and the absurd, in his daily walks at home, never fails to entertain, if he think proper to narrate and to comment; and the traveller who wants this faculty of observation journeys to little purpose, and is heard with little pleasure. He sometimes even endeavours to falsify the true reports of his predecessors; and to offer the dulness of his discernment as a proof of his impartiality. Thus much by way of introduction.

Letter II

Let us begin our journey; and whet your imagination to fill up the narrative.

We were sufficient in number to occupy a small cabin; and various reasons determined us to sail down the river, instead of posting by land to Yarmouth. Wind and weather out of the question, he that depends on the word of a captain, for the day that his vessel will

be ready to sail, will be deceived ninety-nine times in a hundred : a week of additional latitude is often too little. Not thoroughly aware of this, we left the polite parish of Mary-le-bone, and removed to the purlieus of London-Bridge. How many thanks are due to our worthy and liberal friend, G——, for the many invitations he gave us to his table, and the pleasant urbanity with which we were there treated. But these, you well know, are not the only acts of kindness for which we are indebted to this freehearted, worthy man.

About two days before we went on board, a sudden difficulty seemed to start. We were told we should be stopped at Gravesend, if we had not a passport. This seemed incredible : we inquired, and some affirmed, and others denied the necessity of such a document. Could an Englishman want a passport, to go wherever his business or his pleasure might invite him, within the British domains, or to a neutral state ? By many the idea was scouted, and as it proved, justly. Yet others were so positive in affirming the reverse, that I thought it prudent, for full security, to go to Gravesend, and inquire.

It happened to be at the hour when the tide served, and the common passage-boats were ready to sail ; and, as this was a cheap, an expeditious, and to me a novel conveyance, it was in every sense acceptable. Those who have made the experiment, know with what solicitations they have been invited to step on board first one boat and then another. On this occasion, it happened that the Queen Charlotte, and the Prince of Wales, were rivals : but, as I was first harangued by the orator of the Charlotte, and had no other preponderating motive, the right seemed to be in her ; and I was escorted, with great eagerness and civility, to my seat.

I had heard so much of Gravesend passengers, and the peculiar rhetoric in which they indulge, that I thought it probable they would detect something ridiculous in the cut of my coat, the colour of my hair, or some other feature or appurtenance about me. I was not deceived. The short-sightedness that obliges me to wear spectacles, has often subjected me to the derision of the working community; who never suspect there can be a rational motive for walking the streets with what they generally regard as a badge of supreme folly. I had not taken my place five seconds, before I saw the leer and the wink go round. The weather being fine, every body was on deck; and the assumed gravity of my look, at first checked risibility. But the pause was short. An impudent fellow opposite to me, looking in my face, said—"The next time I go to court, I will get a saddle for my nose; because I see it is all the go."—"You had better get a handle to your hat," said the man at the helm, whose invitation to come on board I had followed; and who therefore, I supposed, thought proper to be my champion. My assailant knew his man; and, without noticing this retort continued.—"I'll ask my granny to leave me her barnacles. Pray, Sir, how many candles may you see in the dark, when only one is lighted?" "How many fools did you meet, when you last dipt your pate in a pail of water? Who gave you that coarse net-work, to cover your face? Why did not you ask your wife to wash it before you came out?" (The man was scarred with pock-marks, and the river tar continued.) "You're a pretty fellow to hoist the slang-flag! Where did you learn gull shooting? You are an apt scholar! You could eat a giblet-pye before you could spell goose. . . ." Enough

of these vulgar but merry kind of combats. Would that the well-bred duelist were harmless![1]

I believe it was here I first remarked one of the many superstitious habits of seamen; that of whistling for a wind. I find it is common to them all; from the captain to the cabin-boy. The day was more calm than either the passengers, or the boat-men wished; and, to beguile the time, a man sang the beautiful ballad of Black-Eyed Susan. Having ended, another told us a tragical tale, which the song no doubt had brought to memory.

The mate of a ship had a sweetheart; who came on board the evening he was to sail. She was a pretty girl,

[1] Holcroft was called a "*chevalier des lunettes* in the meridian of Hyde Park" in *The Pursuits of Literature*, 5th edition (1798), p. 300, from his constant appearances on horse-back and bespectacled. In his own *Travels*, he said: "Accident has given me what may be esteemed a comparative test of politeness. Being short-sighted, I began to wear spectacles nearly thirty years ago, when the custom of walking the streets in them was scarcely introduced: not only the common people, of every country, but the well bred, at that time, deemed it a singularity; and a mark rather of the coxcomb than the man of sense. The English populace, when I passed, would often call me Mr. Four-eyes; but I never met a greater instance of rudeness from them than this whereas, in Paris, the first time I went there, *Viola les quatres yeux* was much more frequently repeated, and with an air of greater rudeness and contempt. One day, a youth, who was nearly a man, tolerably dressed, therefore not of the lowest order, suddenly darted his two fingers almost to my face uttering the same exclamation."

and deeply affected. Her love was strong, or rather violent. Having drawn him aside, she told him, if they parted, she was certain they should never meet again; and that she had not the power to leave the ship. He remonstrated on the impossibility of her stay; but she could listen to nothing but her passion, fears, and forebodings. She wept, intreated, went on her knees; and, if he would but consent, said she would hide herself in the forecastle, till the ship should be under way. The mate, who could not comply, at length reproved and left her In anger; while she threatened her own destruction. He went below; and, not seeing her when he returned on deck, he concluded she was gone. Alas! the poor agitated, and despairing creature, had thrown herself over-board. She had done it unseen; and the mate, immediately afterward perceiving that the boat in which she came was waiting, began to inquire: but no one knew what was become of her. He recollected her proposition to hide herself, and went in search: certain, as he supposed, she had made the attempt. She was no where to be found: his alarm increased; his cheeks became pale. One man said "he had heard something fall into the water; and to be sure it must be she. Who knew but she might have been thrown over-board?" Suspicions arose: the pallid hue and wild terror of the poor mate, gave them strength: he was taken into custody, tried for the supposed murder, and in great danger of suffering death; so strong did the circumstances against him appear to be, in the opinion of his judges. One witness, however, was very clear in his testimony, that he saw the mate go under hatches, and leave the deceased on the deck; that he likewise saw him return; and that it was during this

interval, the accident must have happened: for that he and others had accompanied the mate in his search to find her. Thus the positive and accurate evidence of this witness, saved his shipmate from an ignominious death.

The life of a man, in a court of law, depends upon a breath. Remember it, you who sit in judgment on the lives of your fellow creatures!

Another told us how his cabin-boy (he was himself a sea-captain) jumped over-board in a rough sea, to recover a mop; which he had accidentally let fall. He succeeded; but it was at the risk of his life. "I asked him," said the captain, "how he came to do such a thing? and the little hell-spawn told me, 'he was afraid I should *give him the cat;* if the mop had been lost.'—I'll give it you to some tune, lubber, said I, if you do such a thing again."—So much for a captain's humanity. This is no bad instance of the general despotism exercised on board of ships.

Fine writing will object to the coarseness of phraseology in this letter; and, under other circumstances, I would not give fine writing such cause of complaint: but, were it changed in this place, we should not longer be in company with sea-captains and passengers from Billingsgate in a Gravesend boat.

Letter III

We parted during a calm, in my last; but remember we are not yet at Gravesend. In wit, vulgar or refined, puns are more frequent agents than wits generally suppose. Hearing a child cry in a woman's arms, a sailor exclaimed—"So! We have a squall: we shall

soon have a breeze."—"Yes," replied a second, "I hope another hand will be put to the bellows."

It so happened that the punster was a prophet. The sails swelled; and the steersman told us "we could not have a better wind, if we had bought one." To which another added—"he wished he could find the way to the weather-office."

I doubt if there be a nation existing more skilful and alert, on the water, than the English. The Thames in particular, has vessels so numerous, and of such various kinds, riding and traversing its waves in such endless directions, that the unaccustomed eye is confused in its attempts to distinguish and individualize the moving multitude. Ships, snows, brigs, sloops, cutters, barges, lighters, boats, vessels of every form and size, and from all regions of the Earth! My heart beat, while I watched the dexterity with which they mutually shunned the shocks, that at every returning moment, threatened each other with oversetting. Of this we were once in danger. The steersman of a heavy barge, had his attention called away, perhaps not three-seconds, from his duty; and it was with the utmost exertion, and presence of mind, that the active fellows on board the Charlotte kept her from running foul of the barge. The danger past, they were enraged; and began to rate the barge-man: who, angry with and ashamed of himself, bade them in a surly tone "mind their own business." "You don't mind yours," aptly retorted one of them. "I'll be damned if you are he that set the Thames on fire."

I was not a little amused by an itinerant bookseller, one of the passengers; who opened his pocket, and spread his wares upon deck: and, to astonish and

invite customers, among other things, exhibited a small quarto, on botany, with coloured plates; which, he told us, was for a *surprising* learned gentleman, at West Thurrock. (Apropos of Thurrock. All bookmen are addicted to etymology. Pray was this the rock of the gothic god, Thor?) Among his literary treasures was a six-penny description of the passage, by water, from London to Gravesend; by the erudite Bibliopole Pocock, of the latter place: from which, if you have the patience to read it, you may discover how many reaches, or windings, are in this traject. Pillaging this boatman's history, and pointing to the shore, our sagacious tradesman told us, "all those houses were built in *one* day's time." The prevaricating knave ought to have given a different emphasis; and have said "in one *day's* time." But wit was always a shuffling fellow, and seldom a friend to truth." The hawker's jocularity, from the same source, was next exerted on a church, of which we had a prospect; which he said was as *light* by night as it was by day! Of the truth of which quaint pun the inventor had no doubt. Yet the unvarying force of gravitation is not perhaps absolutely certain. But I am now getting out of my depth; and will therefore hasten on shore to Gravesend. In despite of the noble stream that washes the banks, this said Gravesend is a dirty, disagreeable place; and for pitiful extortion unrivalled. If you have but little money in your purse, or if you feel indignation or sorrow, at beholding man in the daily practice of petty theft, till the confirmed habit, makes him believe thieving to be justice, and necessary to his happiness, arrange your affairs, so as to make but a short stay at Gravesend. It was my good fortune to remain there only one night. My journey was unnecessary:

no pass was required. But of this I was ignorant. The expense and trouble were trifling, the characters and scene of action new, and the pain of uncertainty was relieved. And now thank your benignant stars, that you have escaped from a Gravesend-boat, and have only paid so trifling a tax on good sense, and good manners. The potentate of the North, at whose breath all things shake, having honoured a yatcht by his presence, issued an edict, commanding that it should no longer remain a paltry yatcht, but become a glorious frigate. Peter was not so great as Paul; for Peter could only change a brown loaf into Banbury mutton.

Letter IV

And now comes the day of departure: and now farewel for a time to London, that hive of souls; itself the soul of Britain, the seat of action, the city of great events! Farewel to many pleasures, and to many pains! to friends in whom the heart delighted! to foes that persecuted they knew not why! we go in search of better days.

Before we embark, suffer me to make an observation, and tell a story. Fortune is a capricious jade; she flies from those who pursue; and pursues those who shun her. The remark is old; but not, I believe, the tale to which it leads.

In the town of Halberstadt, not long ago, there lived a tanner, remarkable for having been made enormously rich against his will. During the seven years' war, the French, being at this place, had collected all the cattle in the environs, the skins of which they had to sell. The tanners of Halberstadt had but little power to buy, one

alone excepted. To him the French applied; but, not understanding speculation after a certain quantity, he absolutely refused any more. Conquerors are not to be trifled with; and finding that their persuasions, which indeed were numberless, could not prevail, they resorted to the *argumentum baculinum*, and the tanner was at last beat into compliance. It was however under the condition that the other tanners would, at a fair price, lend him their tan-pits; and for this the argumentative French very readily undertook. The tanners were summoned, refused, and the rhetoric of the bastinado was again employed. It was resistless; the tanners let out their tan-pits. The tanner, who bout the hides at one-sixth of their value, parted with the dollars he had been so desirous to retain; and, in a few years afterward, became the wealthiest tanner in Germany.

I will give you another example of the caprice of this said Madam Fortune.

In Germany there are lotteries of various construction. Of one of these the law is, that he who draws a first prize, a second, and a third, shall the fourth time be one of the five that are to draw for the capital lot of I know not how many thousand dollars. A cooper, who loved to tap the barrels he hooped, bought a ticket, which came up a prize once, twice, and thrice; but the foolish fellow was thirsty; and being offered drink for the present, and money to buy more for a fortnight to come, he could not resist the temptation, and sold his ticket, which was a fourth time the fortunate number. He comforted himself with his can; and made a second venture, with exactly the same good and ill success. To another man this would have been horribly vexatious; but the jovial cooper let it pass; and when the next

lottery came, made another purchase. The third time it had arrived at the third stage of winning, and he was again on the point of parting with his chance. By something of persuasion, and something of force, the reckless fellow was prevented. "Fortune," said his friends, or perhaps his wife, though this is the kind of husband a wife knows least how to manage, "Fortune absolutely persecutes you to accept her favours: why do you so perversely cast them from you?" For once the sot heard reason; and the doctrine of chances proved how dangerous it is to lay the long odds; for the cooper's ticket again gained the great prize.

From us Fortune is flying; and we are now in pursuit. The sequel will shew how perverse a jade she is, and how determined not to be overtaken.

On the first of July, 1799, we went on board the Kennet, Captain Thomson. All was confusion, all hurry. Barges, loaded with prodigious bales, lay beside her; a dozen men were straining every nerve to raise them over her side, and stow them between her ribs. It excited attention and surprise to see these cumbrous packs wedged with such contrivance as scarcely to leave a vacancy. Every thing that suppleness of limb shews, sinews and muscular force could affect, was in continual exertion. The vessel was to fall down the river the next tide; which seemed incompatible with the labour to be performed.

With what additional wonder do I recollect scenes like these in my native country, having compared them with the inattention I since have witnessed. Here every man was active and intelligent; and one even supremely above the rest. Indeed it was prodigious. He was the mate; he directed the whole; his eye was every where;

and his arm seemed to work miracles. He was full six feet high; and when the ponderous load seemed to defy their collected strength, he came, applied his giant force, and, at the first pull, it began to move. His agility was no less surprising, and almost irreconcilable to such bulk; for his wrist would doubly measure that of an ordinary man. His understanding was equal to his bodily power; he instantly saw what was wrong and the way in which it was to be rectified. Give but his faculties another circle of action, and an epic poet might have made this man his hero; yet he was but the mate of a ship, subject to a captain who, though no fool, was far indeed from his equal; and when I asked him if he did not mean to be a captain himself, answered with a sigh—"I wish, Sir, I may ever have so much good fortune."

In what a traverse and frequently ludicrous manner does accident arrange the place and office of man, and the affairs of this poor world!

The mate's name was Baird; and he and his commander were both Scotchmen. In the invoice, he was written captain, and the captain supercargo; a falsehood to which the infamous practice of pressing has given birth; a mate, like a foremast man, being liable to be pressed.

When I came on board, and saw the work that was still to do, I concluded it was impossible it should be accomplished. The mate himself doubted, but hoped, and worked like legion. Yes; we were at Gravesend the next day, where we were examined at the Alien Office; and on the evening of the third, anchored at the Nore.

The ocean was before us; the evening was calm; the

expanse vast; the shores of Essex and of Kent were to the right and left; and the fleet with which we were to sail, with our convoy, and the admiral's ship that guards the Nore, were all in view. The silence that reigned was suddenly interrupted by the eight o'clock bell, that rang from vessel to vessel; and, much more agreeably, by the admiral's military band. We were at a proper distance; and the music came so softened to our ears that it was delightful.

The captain went on board our convoy; received his sailing instructions; and the next morning the fleet, about thirty in number, was under weigh.

Owing to the closeness with which the ship was stowed, the decks were so belumbered, that it required the cat-like activity of a sailor to pass, without a fall, to the forecastle. I supposed they were so to continue. How much was I mistaken! No sooner was the business of setting the sails performed, than the active Baird began a clearance. All hands were at work; the hatches opened; room for stowage still was to be found; cables were coiled; and, in less than half an hour, no signs of disorder or incumbrance were to be seen. In some things, how full of caution is a sailor! How active is he, and how orderly on the approach of storm or battle! What contradictions are there in his habits! The least appearance of defect in his shrouds, braces, or rigging, must be repaired: his decks must be daily washed; to every thing that regards the safety of the ship, the strictest attention must be paid. He must not sleep more than four hours at a time, and never soundly: the least alarm must bring him upon deck. His eye must alternately be upon the watch; his apprehension of danger must never cease. Meanwhile, his

own convenience is utterly neglected. Being at sea, he puts on any dirty or ragged jacket, sleeps upon boards or ropes, and feeds on the coarsest fare. Our cook was half covered with grease and tar; his hands were uncommonly large, and chapped; and he washed his dishes with a cable's end. It often happens that the sailor's beef is half putrid, his butter and cheese the same; his biscuits swarming with maggots; and his water stinking. To this he is sometimes by necessity reduced; and the landsman is astonished at the habits which such hard necessities have taught. But a voyage to Hamburgh is seldom of so much severity; and the pampered passenger as seldom goes to sea unprovided.

Letter V

Our convoy was sluggish, and we were off the Norfolk coast on the fifth. We gave it some few parting sighs, remembering the relations and friends that were there; and who, perhaps, had they known the incident, would have brought down their telescopes, to have taken a last view. Was it affection or vanity that gave me this thought? Let it be permitted to hope the best.

He that makes a voyage and meets with no adventures, using the common phrase, must be greatly in or greatly out of luck; unless indeed we suppose him fast asleep, which, with the convenience of a close carriage, is the way that most travellers see the world. A watchman, shut up in his box at midnight, without the aid of his candle and lantern, sees it as well. We were willing to keep awake, and were not in want of stimulants. I had been to sea before more than once, yet had numberless things to remark: especially as I had never before sailed

with a convoy. The Kennet was a good sailer; but if we ran before our guardian, we were liable to have a ten-pounder sent, with a possibility of hitting us, as a warning order to *keep astern.* If we were too close, the peril was that of *running foul* of the ships *under the Commodore's lee.* If the weather *fell* hazy, this danger increased. If it was a calm, we must no less carefully keep our distance. Should you have supposed that, being on the boundless ocean, you must always have sea room enough, the above hints may help to rectify your mistake.

On the sixth, we were off the Texel; on the seventh saw Lord Duncan's fleet; and on the eighth were still upon the Dutch coast. I repeat what the mariners and their charts told me; for I could not see land. The sailing under the protection of cannon balls, the *look-out* that was kept for the approach of an enemy, and the hostile fleets of Britain proudly riding on a threatened shore, inspired thoughts which—I will take another time to tell you what these thoughts were. We caught gurnets, a pretty but cruel warfare. The wretched animal was generally an hour gasping for the medium in which, till then, he had breathed, and dying with difficulty.

A more animating incident occurred. Perhaps you are ignorant that smugglers, if pursued, will sink their cargoes of gin, and leave a buoy; by the aid of which they are sometimes recovered. From one of these, as it was supposed, a keg was seen to come swimming among the fleet. The sight awakened two passions at once—drunkenness and ambition. To what dangers do they expose the thirsty, the daring and the rash! The fleet was under sail; and the keg swam in a contrary

direction. We perceived a consultation was held on board a ship but little distant. In a moment, one of the sailors began to strip. We watched his proceedings with surprise and apprehension ; we saw him plunge into the sea, and stem the waves with such eagerness that it seemed impossible for his strength not to be presently exhausted. How impatiently did the eye pursue him, his head now hidden, and now seen dancing among the waves, till we could no longer catch a glimpse. It was a fearful distance. There was something so daring in the attempt, and so vigorous in the execution, that he became a kind of hero ; in whose dubious fate every heart was interested.

Meanwhile the sailors, who first discovered the prize in question, *lay to ;* that is, turned the ship so that the sails did not catch the winds : and hoisted out their boat. In this they went in search of the swimmer and the keg. We could not discover their proceedings ; but we learned, after their return, that the sailor had overtaken and seized the object of his wishes ; and they brought him and his prize once more on board of the ship to which he belonged in triumph.

A rash action, when successful, never fails to be admired. To people who live on shore, the remarks, language, and adventures of mariners are often amusing. The answers, however, which the latter return to passengers, are frequently surly, and expressive of contempt. Sailors, I assure you, are as pragmatic, and full of pedantry in their way, as any Doctor the Universities can afford. Men are always surprised at, and diverted by each other's ignorance ; forgetting their own.

The seaman, however, has a feature common to us all ; he is pleased with those who will listen to his

complaints. One of our men told me how long he had served on board a man of war, the sufferings he there endured, and painted the despotism of naval officers, in the anecdotes he related. A Captain, who perhaps had read Culpepper, or some such erudite author, thought proper to physic his crew regularly once a month; and to take care the doses he prescribed were actually swallowed. This was not all; if the men were sick afterwards, they were put in the bilboes, to convince them they were well; and one poor fellow, who was extremely weak, was flogged for not running fast enough up the shrouds.

Another of these commanders having given a man three dozen lashes on the starboard of the vessel, ordered him two dozen more on the larboard; that, as he said, one side might not laugh at the other.

The man cited many more incidents of a like kind; adding, that when on board a king's ship, he many a time wished himself dead. Observe, I can only be answerable for my own veracity; I faithfully repeat what I was told.

I shall be equally accurate in what I am going to relate; though it is on a subject which some naturalists have treated as absurd. The Captain and Mate of the Kennet, had both navigated the Coast of Norway, the Northern Ocean, and the Atlantic; and I questioned them concerning the Kraken. They neither of them pretended to have seen this supposed stupendous monster of the waters: but they immediately expressed their firm conviction of its existence. I asked their reasons; and they affirmed it has been twice seen within the last four years.

The first instance they cited was that of a Captain

coming from Archangel, or Greenland, through the Atlantic; ' who was surprised at the appearance of rocks unknown to the chart of mariners, and immediately ordered out his boat, to have them examined; meanwhile the Kraken, that is, the imaginary rocks, disappeared, and he sailed over the place; but forgot, during his astonishment, to sound.

Their second instance was more circumstantial. About two years and a half before the time at which they spoke, a Dane, sailing through the Firth of Forth, on the coast of Scotland, was so terrified, at the appearance of rocks in such a place, that he *lay to;* being for some time persuaded that he had lost his reckoning, and had arrived he knew not where. After consideration, he took courage and sailed past them; and when he arrived at Dundee gave a relation of what he had seen. Finding himself at first disbelieved, he and his crew made oath of the fact; either at the Custom-house or before a Magistrate of Dundee. The narrators were both Scotchmen; and affirmed they spoke of the attestation being thus made from their own knowledge. Persons, who shall deem it worth their trouble, may easily make an inquiry whether any such attestation exists at Dundee.

My informants confirmed, unquestioned, the usual accounts, fabulous or not, that fishermen find plenty of fish on the bank of the Kraken; as they do on sand banks, at a certain distance below the surface; and that these fishermen hasten away, as soon as they perceive the Kraken beginning to rise; because when it goes down, it occasions a dangerous whirlpool. These, you will recollect, are the old stories of Pontoppidan.

Finding this Leviathan so familiar to their belief,

I next inquired if they had heard, or knew any thing of the sea-snake, by some called the sea-worm? To this question I received a still more direct answer. The Mate, Mr. Baird, who certainly was not a liar by habit, whatever mistake or credulity might make him, assured me that, about the midway in a voyage to America, in the Atlantic, he had himself seen a fish, comparatively small in the body, of from forty to fifty fathoms in length; and that it had excited great terror in the Captain, who was well acquainted with those latitudes, lest it should sink the ship.

They both related other stories, concerning the appearance of this sea-worm: asserting that it will rise out of the water as high as a common main mast.

Should you ask, do you repeat these things because you think them credible? I answer, no. But who can affirm he can mark out the boundaries of possibility? Some mariners treat these tales as absolutely false and ridiculous: others seriously affirm them to be true; and I think it a duty to collect evidence, and to remain on this question as on many another, in a certain degree of scepticism.

They spoke of another fact; which, supposing them to speak truth, deserves attention. The waves in the Western Ocean are sometimes so oily, from dead whales, as it is imagined, that they are not much disturbed by a brisk gale. The sailor's brisk gale, observe, by you and me would be called a high wind.

Letter VI

Remember I left you in a gale at sea, and a high wind on shore: but what would you think of a stiff

breeze? I heard one described by a sailor, who swore that it shaved him; that he could not keep his hair safe on his head; and that it made the ship sneeze. His metaphors, and the composure with which he spoke of a tempest, that to a landsman would have been so full of terror, were amusing.

Our voyage was performed by the aid of gentle gales; and we got in view of Heligoland on the morning of the 9th. Being now out of danger from an enemy, the ships were allowed to part company, and each make the best of her way. To people weary of the qualms and inconveniences of a sea-voyage, and impatient to arrive at the place of their destination, with the latent hope of unknown pleasures from unknown sources, this was welcome news. The Captain was teazed with our questions; and we were much disappointed to find there was little hope we should yet see Hamburgh, within four and twenty hours.

It was late in the day before we arrived at the red buoy, where usually the pilot comes on board. We now entered the Elbe, the navigation of which is both difficult and dangerous, if circumstances are unfavourable; and I could not but admire and most sincerely applaud the precautions taken for safety, and augur favourably of the industry and understanding I should find in Hamburgh. These, however, are the labours of seafaring men; and such are the dangers of the waters, that sailors, who speaking of them as a class, are far from being the most intelligent, exert very sagacious means to guard against these dangers. The apparent width of the Elbe is great; but the bed of the navigable channel is comparatively small: buoys therefore have been placed, and distinguished by colour and numbering,

to mark out the course of the stream, which winds exceedingly.

The eye of the traveller is always caught by those objects which differ greatly from such as he has been accustomed to see; and the appearance of our pilot was to us highly original. His figure was diminutive, yet so bundled up in jackets and breeches, that it was swelled out to a very respectable bulk. His breeches, far from being small clothes, were large and loose, and had pockets, or rather paunches, at the sides, in which he put his pipe, his tobacco, his bread and cheese, and other necessaries. I suppose he wore half a dozen pair; for he unbuttoned three, with great unconcern, before us all, to come at a fourth. His face was thin, his forehead contracted, his chin peaked, his nose large, his mouth wide, his teeth black and decayed, and his eyes small and red. Having given his directions, as soon as he had leisure he dressed, or rather undressed himself, that he might look respectably before the ladies; that is, he pulled off two jackets, the first exceedingly thick and weather proof, two pair of trowsers, and his boots, which hung loose about his legs. He then appeared in a grey damask doublet, made probably from his great grandmother's holiday gown, long quartered shoes, and a pair of pewter single-tongued buckles, extravagantly large, and diamond cut. He had a gigantic kind of sleeve-button to fasten his waistband, and another of the same form but less, at his shirt collar; these, by their embossing, equalled his buckles in splendour: and in his now reduced size, he accurately resembled the wooden men cut in Dutch toys. I found amusement in studying this figure, it being the first of the kind I had seen. His language was low Dutch, but he spoke

broken English; and I endeavoured to make him talk; but as he knew nothing, he could say nothing. The office of pilot frequently requires great presence of mind, activity, and courage: this man had certainly no such qualities.

Under his guidance, however, we entered the Elbe; and the shores of Holstein on the left, and Hanover on the right, began to close upon us. I know not when or how it came there, but the picture I had in my mind of Holstein, was that of one of the rude and naked countries of the North; and I felt surprise as we approached its banks to see them frequently adorned with houses built of brick, and the gable ends painted green. This, however, as I afterwards found, is by no means the general style of building in that province; but it appears that men every where take delight in having pleasant habitations on the banks of rivers. At this part of the Elbe the left hand shore had a flat and low appearance; while in Hanover we could see not mountains, for there are none in these parts of Germany, but high lands. I know not why, but the traveller appears to have a latent expectation that every thing which he is to see, is to be unlike every thing he has seen; and is almost disappointed to find that trees are trees, and that the banks of rivers, in foreign countries, are as verdant as those of his native land. It is true, there are in reality marking differences; but these must be sought for in the minuter parts, and not in the grand features of Nature; some few and singular instances excepted.

The Elbe cannot be navigated in the dark; for the buoys and pilot marks cannot be discerned; and at twilight we cast anchor. At this the sailors did not

repine; it was a necessity to which they knew they must submit; but we, impatient passengers, heard with regret that the wind blew peculiarly fresh and fair. In the middle of the night it strengthened, and opposed the tide; in consequence of which the waves rose, and the ship rolled violently. Doors flew open, boxes and bottles tumbled from their places, and there was a great clatter in the cabin. It seemed strange to be so much disturbed, having now passed the sea, and safely arrived in the river. Trifles, to which we are unaccustomed, excite surprise.

Letter VII

The anchor was weighed as early as possible; for it was still doubtful whether we should arrive at Hamburgh before the close of day.

According to regulation, the pilot from the red buoy has a right only to proceed to a certain distance; after which another, if he be in readiness, comes on board and takes charge of the vessel. Our little man was very anxious in his hopes that a successor would not appear; and that he should have the whole profit of proceeding to Hamburgh. But he was disappointed. At the proper station his rival came; and he returned. The second pilot was no less characteristic in manner and appearance than the first; though very different. His dress, indeed, was nearly the same; but instead of the insignificance of the former, he had an assuming deportment; which agreeing with the costume, made me imagine I was actually in company with ancient Pistol. With his pipe in his mouth, his wide, straddling gait, and his hands in his breeches' side-pockets, commanding with a kind of bluff authority, and speaking a half unintelligible jargon,

the picture was almost complete. His son was with him; a young boy, the likeness and the ape of his father. The decayed state of the man's teeth, made me conjecture that smoaking might be a principal agent in producing this defect; which I afterwards found to be common among the Germans.

This man, however, had activity in his profession; and it was fortunate that he, instead of the former, was our pilot: for, in going up the river, had not he and all the crew strongly exerted themselves, we might have been run down by the sluggish neglect of a Dane; which danger we escaped with great difficulty.

As we proceeded, the appearance of the opposite shores considerably varied; we lost sight of the distant high lands in Hanover, and saw nothing but a dead and low flat; while the Holstein bank became elevated, the number of the green-ended houses increased, and the town and fortifications of Gluckstadt came in view. It is low, and we could see little of the palace of which our pilot vaunted. We discerned nothing that in the least approached magnificence; but saw many things that had a charming air of rural calm and cleanliness. These pleasing appearances became more frequent as we approached Altona; but we could not sufficiently enjoy them, for it was now once more the close of day. Being at Altona, we were glad, though surprised, to find ourselves within a gun shot's distance of Hamburgh: but our joy on this occasion was short; for we heard, with vexation, that the gates of Hamburgh, as well of the port as of the city, were regularly shut at dusk; and that admission, even for a prince, was then impossible.

Altona, like Hamburgh, is a sea-port town; and it

may safely be prophesied, that at no very distant period, they will form but one place. The number of shipping at Altona, was considerable, though small, when compared to those that crowded the harbours of Hamburgh. But the appearance that catches the eye, and distinguishes these cities from all that I had before seen, was the excessive quantity of windows in the houses; the front surfaces of which are nearly one half of glass. I had remarked the upper stories of certain manufacturing houses in London, that have rows of windows in the same manner; and inquired if the houses I now saw were all manufactories? It was a question the sailors could not answer, but I afterwards found that every house was thus constructed.

About nine o'clock, we came to moorings in the river, without the harbour; exceedingly mortified at being obliged to sleep another night on board; knowing that every thing to give us a pleasant reception had been prepared by our friends on shore. Expectation is whetted by difficulty and delay: yet expectation, without these stimulants, is generally too high. We were soon to be on German ground; and Germany is one of the grand divisions of Europe; renowned for its ancient resistance to the Roman arms, and claiming in modern times, not only the destructive honours of war, but a high rank in every department of science and belles lettres; we should therefore find it peopled with the learned, the polite, and the brave. With these, and a thousand other grateful images, we appeased our impatience, and once more waited the return of day. How eager is man for the future,—how insensible to the present!—Had he the power, how would he lend wings to time, and wish his life away!

Letter VIII

The morning came, the captain ordered out his boat, and we had scarcely patience to descend into it with care. The fleet that had arrived had to find berths in the harbour: ships must change their stations; some to depart, others to load, or unload: the boats and barges employed seemed almost as numerous as the ships themselves: multitudes of the peasants that inhabit the banks of the Elbe, who, from necessity, are both watermen and farmers, were arriving, male and female, in their skiffs, to provision the devouring city: all was life, all was motion; and we, rowing in the midst of the scene, had our faculties wholly absorbed by the countless novelties that at once invaded them. The animation of the Elbe cannot indeed be said to equal that of the Thames: but then the objects were so different, and their appearance generally was so uncouth and boorish, that the eye was bewildered, and unable to examine them individually.

We were stopped at the entrance of the harbour by the voice of a sentinel, and questioned concerning who we were, and what our trunks contained; but this is rather a form than a scrutiny; for few ports are so free of access, or give so little trouble with respect to Custom-house duties, as that of Hamburg. The government of Hamburg, comparatively, has laid but few restraints upon trade: that is, it has practised fewer of the vices of finance, common, more or less, to all governments; which absurdly rob, by their endeavours to enrich themselves. We landed on the *Vorsetzen*, at the principal stairs of the harbour, and were imme-

diately struck by their inconvenience : they were narrow, steep, and dangerous, especially to persons carrying luggage. The *krahnziehers*, or city porters, perceiving we were English, and unacquainted with the place, pressed their service upon us, which we eagerly enough accepted ; and having landed our trunks on the quay, one of them went for a coach, and another for a car, to remove us and our effects. We intreated them to make haste, which they promised ; and though they kept us waiting in vexation above half an hour, they might still be said to keep their word : as Germans, they were quick. We had indeed heard much of the inflexible phlegm of this people, but as yet we were novices in its practical effects. While we stood watching our luggage, gazed at and gazing, the appearance of those around us strange to us, and ours to them, among other things that attracted attention were two waggons, if they might so be called, that met ; and though the street, speaking of Hamburgh, was tolerably wide, could scarcely pass. Each was drawn by four horses, two abreast, the driver riding on the rear or left hand shaft-horse ; each had four wheels, and not two feet broad at the bottom, though both were uncommonly long, the axle-trees projected above a foot on each side ; in short, nothing could be more ill constructed for turning and passing in narrow streets. The convenience which would have resulted from their small width, was wholly destroyed by the projecting axle-trees ; the rope harness was so long, and the horses drew at such a distance from each other, as at once to employ the space of drawing abreast, and what was nearly sufficient to have drawn lengthways. This, added to the length of the waggons, the awkwardness of the drivers, and the lazy unconcern

with which they sat and looked, when they had embarrassed each other, before they determined how they would act, combining and harmonizing with other appearances around us, immediately gave birth to much surmise and meditation on national character. It was heightened too by the contents of one of the waggons, which was loaded with the filth and ordure of the city, as offensive almost to the sight as to the smell. Let us not, however, be too hasty in our conclusions, the detail of facts as they arise will best explain the real state of things: individually they may mislead, but collected and compared, they must elucidate.

It is true the next I have to relate is of the unfavourable kind. Three of the *krahnziehers* harnessed themselves to the car that drew our luggage; the distance they had to take it might be six or seven hundred yards, and a porter in London would willingly have done the whole work for three shillings; but their demand was twelve. It is true three of them thought proper to employ themselves, and they rendered that which might have been easy and expeditious, laborious and slow. Neither was their demand complied with; one third was abated: but then they supposed themselves paid no more than their due, and were dissatisfied that strangers were not taxed higher. It is said indeed, and I suppose truly, that throughout Germany labour is no where so extravagantly paid as in Hamburg; but a comparative estimate of the rate of labour is much wanted; for it is a subject on which there are many and gross mistakes. In proportion as the inhabitants of a country are ignorant, labour is supposed to be cheap: the very reverse is generally the truth.

BOOK VII

CLOSING YEARS

CLOSING YEARS

ON his arrival at Hamburgh,[1] he went to lodge at the house of his daughter and her husband, Mr. Cole, who was settled there in trade.[2] He afterwards went to reside at the house of ——, where he paid five pounds a week; and as his remittances from England were often interrupted, he would have been reduced to great distress, had it not been for the generous exertions of a stranger, a Mr. Schuckmacher. This gentleman, who was a merchant, advanced 250*l.* to Mr. Holcroft, on his note of hand. The first literary attempt which Mr. Holcroft made after he was settled on the continent failed. This was to set up a journal (the European Repository) containing an account of the state of foreign literature, and anecdotes of celebrated characters. It only reached the second number.[3]

It is certain that Mr. Holcroft's introductions, and his connexions with literary men abroad,

[1] The sentence, "Mr. Holcroft soon after went abroad," has here been omitted from the text by the present editor.

[2] Catherine Strasse.

[3] For a full account of this journal, see Bibliography, and *Notes and Queries*, 13 Feb., 1915 (11 S. xi, 124–5).

would have afforded every opportunity for executing such a work well, had it met with encouragement. While at Hamburgh, he visited Klopstock, Voss, Sander, &c. &c. On his first introduction to Klopstock, the latter laboured to shew the superiority of the German to every other language in conciseness; and challenged Mr. Holcroft to translate with equal conciseness into English. To which he replied, that Klopstock might be easily supposed to overcome Holcroft, but that the English language ought not to suffer on that account. He told Mr. Holcroft a story of Voss, the celebrated classic; that at a time when he was too ill even to hear a scholar read and parse a few lines in the classics, familiar as they were to him, he was still able and desirous to continue his translation of Ovid in Hexameters, and found relief from this laborious task. When Baron Stolberg (the superintendent of the academy) came to visit him, he hid his papers, lest he should be accused of neglect of duty, or blamed for disregarding his health. Sander, a Dane by birth, informed Mr. Holcroft that the Road to Ruin, and the Deserted Daughter, had been translated into the Danish language, and that the latter had been the most popular of the pieces brought out the preceding winter at Copenhagen.

The admiration of the Germans for English literature, and their contempt for the French, are well known. Moliere is the only man among the latter, to whom they allow much genius. Their notions of excellence are indeed rather

hypercritical than commonplace. They seem in general to assign the highest stations to the greatest men, but their list of great men is short. There are only four whom they consider as *poets*, that is to say, inventors of a new style, namely, Homer, Dante, Shakspeare, and Goethe. Why the last should have this high rank assigned him, I do not know. He is placed by the Germans themselves far above Schiller. Mr. Holcroft while abroad, translated his poem of Herman and Dorothea. A note from the author to the translator on this subject, will be found among the letters at the end of the volume.[1]—Mr. Holcroft also, while he was at Hamburgh, finished and sent over the comedy of "Hear both Sides," and his translation of "Deaf and Dumb," which were afterwards acted with success, at Drury-Lane.

On his departure from England, he had renounced all idea of picture-dealing, and connoisseurship. He however attended several picture-sales, but without attempting to bid. One day as he was strolling along the street, his attention was caught by a small picture, which lay among some lumber at a broker's shop. He went in, asked the price of it, and was answered three guineas. Mr. Holcroft made no bargain, but determined to go home, and get Mrs. Holcroft to come and look at it, to see whether any one else must not be as much struck with it as he was. On re-examining the picture, his confidence in its being an original increased, and he paid

[1] Missing from the 1816 edition and not found.

the money for it. As he was returning home in triumph with the picture under his arm, he met Mercier (Mrs. Holcroft's father), who had himself been a dabbler in pictures, and who, laughing, exclaimed, "A ce trait je connois mon sang."

The first step being got over, they consulted together, how to turn this accident to advantage; they henceforward frequented auction-rooms, and ransacked brokers' shops, to make mutual discoveries of original pictures, which might be had for a song. Mr. Holcroft, in this manner, laid out between four and five hundred pounds, by which he expected to clear at least double the sum.

In this expectation he was once more wretchedly disappointed.[1] Not that the pictures were in themselves bad, they were many of them excellent, and in general by the masters to whom they were attributed; but they were not the finest specimens of those masters, and with respect to second rate pictures, it requires either an acquaintance with the particular master who happens to be in vogue for the time, or regular connexions with other picture-dealers, to secure the purchaser against loss. The pictures which Mr. Holcroft sent over to England, were fifty-seven in number. They were entrusted to the care of Mr. Godwin. He prevailed on some

[1] There exist some very interesting letters on this subject to his friend, Godwin. In one Holcroft speaks of "this picture dealing insanity of mine." C. Kegan Paul, *Wm. Godwin*, 2: 21.

professional friends, to go and look at them, who thought they would hardly sell for the amount of the custom-house-duties, which were a hundred-and-fifty pounds. A few of them were however brought away, and left in the care of Mr. Opie.[1] The following friendly letter to Mr. Holcroft, was written on this subject.

"*December* 5, 1799.

"I am quite ashamed that your letter should have remained so long unnoticed; but being at Norwich when it arrived, I thought it better to wait till I came to town, and had seen the pictures mentioned in it, that I might at the same time I answered it, give you some account of them.

"The pictures I found, through the care of Mr. Gillies, safely lodged in my house on my return to town, which was only three days ago. With the sketch by Rubens, I am quite charmed; it is really a most exquisite thing. The portrait is a good one; but is not the likeness of Lord Stratford, nor painted by Vandyke. The other two are not at first view so much to my taste, nor am I convinced they were painted by the master to whom you attribute them; but I cannot speak decisively, till I have examined them with more attention. Care shall be taken of all, but the Rubens I have mounted into my painting room, as it contains a great deal worth studying.

[1] Cf. C. Kegan Paul, *Wm. Godwin*, 1 : 348.

"You will do great injustice to the sentiments of esteem and friendship, which both Mrs. Opie and myself feel for you, if you do not rest assured that to hear of your health and welfare, will at all times give us pleasure; and we have only to beg that in your next, you will make no other use of your bridle, than to lay its reins on the neck of your affection, in the utmost confidence, that all that comes from you, will be received with a most hearty welcome.

"I am, with the highest esteem,

"Yours most sincerely,

"J. Opie." [1]

These pictures were all of them afterwards redeemed from the customhouse; and with those which Mr. Holcroft had bought in at his first sale, and other purchases he made on the continent, sold for near 700*l.*

While at Hamburgh, Mr. Holcroft met with one of those alarming accidents, of which, in the course of his life, a more than usual number fell to his share. He had been recommended to bathe his feet in hot water, and mix a certain quantity of aquafortis in the bath. As he was pouring the aquafortis into the tub, the steam of the water caused the bottle, which was of very thin glass, to burst; the aquafortis flew up to his face, burned his wrists to the bone; but luckily his spectacles saved his eyes. The state he was in was dreadful, yet not a single complaint

[1] Especially interesting since very few letters written by Opie survive.

escaped him. "Thank God," he exclaimed to his terrified wife, who just before the accident had wished to pour the aquafortis in, but was prevented from doing so, "You and the child (whom she held in her arms) are safe!" His daughters, who were undressing in the next room, alarmed by the shrieks of Mrs. Holcroft, rushed into the apartment, which was filled with steam; and the distraction of the youngest at seeing the condition her father was in, deprived her of all presence of mind. "For Heaven's sake, Fanny," said her father, "calm yourself; and do you, Sophy, listen to what I say. Let Dr. Maclean be immediately fetched: he lives in such a street. Your violent grief, my dear girls, instead of good, does harm. Be collected, and act like rational beings." It was more than two hours before he was attended by his friend, Dr. Maclean. Till he arrived, Mr. Holcroft supposed himself deprived of sight; and the joy which the assurance that he was not blind excited may be easily imagined. During a long and painful confinement, he was perfectly cheerful, and his mind always employed and active.[1]

Two years before this accident, Mr. Holcroft was so dangerously ill as to be given over by his physicians: and at that time his fortitude and presence of mind saved his life. One night the spasms, to which he was subject, were so violent, that he felt, if they continued, he could not

[1] Holcroft's own temperate relation of this accident is found in a letter to Godwin. C. Kegan Paul, *Wm. Godwin*, 2: 22.

live. Dr. Pitcairn had advised him to take a very small quantity of laudanum, beginning with five drops, which he might increase to fifteen or twenty at the utmost, should the pain become worse. Finding the pain grow more and more violent, he desired his amanuensis who attended him, to give him fifteen, then twenty drops at a time. This he took to the amount of 140 in the course of the night. Mr. Ralph expostulated, and said he was afraid to give them; but Mr. Holcroft insisted—"If these pains continue," said he, "it is impossible I should live, and I can but die." This bold but dangerous experiment succeeded.

Mr. Holcroft's stay at Hamburgh lasted above a year.[1] He had some difficulty in procuring a passport to Paris from the French minister at the Hague (as we were then at war with France), but on a second application he succeeded. He had also met with some impediment in obtaining one from Mr. Frere, before he went abroad. While he was at *Paris*,[2] a paragraph appeared in one of our morning papers, directly charging him with being a spy of the French government.

["The vigilant Fouche, as it appears, is dexterous enough to avail himself of the talents, and information of men of all countries. His system of police and *espionage* has lately acquired a powerful supporter in the

[1] On July 19, 1799, he had been "in this place eight days," and he was on the point of departure on Dec. 26, 1800. (C. Kegan Paul, *Wm. Godwin*, 1: 343; 2: 26.)

[2] "*Hamburgh*" in the original text is in error.

person of one of the 'soi-disant' twelve Apostles of Liberty. Our countrymen, therefore, who resort to Paris, will do well to be extremely guarded in their conduct, if they wish to be secure against the arts of this informer; who, though once in the *road to ruin*, it seems now is in the highway to fortune."]

To this paragraph he condescended to make a public answer.[1]

[1] The "answer" has not been found. The "paragraph" appeared in *The Times*, 26 January, 1802, p. 24. Further reference to this letter is to be found in letters to Godwin from Holcroft (C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, 2: 111), and from Lady Mountcashell, daughter of Viscount Kingsborough, to whom Mary Wollstonecraft had been governess—Lady Mountcashell saying that "some officious persons" had warned her against Holcroft (cf. *Notes and Queries*, 12 S. ix, 490, Dec. 17, 1921).

From *An Irish Peer on the Continent* (1801–1803). *Being a narrative of the tour of Stephen, 2nd Earl Mount Cashell, through France, Italy, etc., as related by Catherine Wilmot.* Edited by Thomas U. Sadleir . . . London . . . 1920:

"Sund. Dec. 13th. Hotel d'Espagne, Paris, 1801.

"I want to mention Mr. Holcroft, to whom Lady Mountcashell had a letter of introduction, and who paid his first visit last Tuesday. He is between 60 and 70 years of age, apparently a clear-headed sensible man, with coarse features, mellow'd away by thought, which has shed itself thro'out his ugly countenance. He was originally a journey-man shoemaker, which trade he follow'd till he was five and twenty, and since that time educated himself into what he is. We went to see Mrs. and Miss Holcroft [Louisa and Frances] the next

Mr. Holcroft remained above two years at Paris.[1] While here, he seems to have been chiefly occupied in collecting materials for the large work on the manners, &c. of this capital, which he published after his return, in 1804.[2] Of this work (Travels into France, &c.) it is only just to say, that it is one of the most interesting

day; they are both very young women. The former, a French woman very pretty and lively and speaking both languages equally well. Miss Holcroft enthusiastic, and excessively like her Father whom she adores. We have been reading a translation of his from the German, a little poem call'd 'Herman and Dorothea,' pretty enough and simple. But I should have liked it better in Rhyme, than in blank verse. I feel as if I should like to say a hundred bitter things of Holcroft, but I have such a trick of not penetrating into people's characters that I don't like to trust myself. He has been here several times and has enter'd fully into conversation which he seems very fond of; a long enquiry into the nature of truth, into which he enter'd eloquently, struck me as very good. But I begin to smoke a little of the Visionary on the Godwinean System of living beyond the Term of Man."

[1] He says he lived at "No. 18, La Rue Honore, second to the left (east) from Rue Florentine" (*Travels*, 1: 162), and he wrote to Godwin from the Rue de Lille, 1st of January, 1802. (C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, 2: 109.)

[2] Page proofs of this volume in the possession of Lamb were later used by that whimsical essayist for a scrapbook, which is interestingly, but not entirely accurately, described by Harry B. Smith in "Charles Lamb's Album," *Scribners' Magazine*, November, 1923.

and instructive books of travels in the language. Its fault perhaps is, that it bears too hard on the foibles of the French, which Mr. Holcroft seems to have regarded too much with the eye of an Englishman. Their own self-sufficiency, it is true, is enough to provoke and justify considerable severity of criticism. With respect to the question itself of the difference between the two nations, all that can be said upon it, I think, amounts only to this, that the one has too much gravity, and the other too much levity. Our gravity frequently degenerates into phlegm, coldness, reserve, pride, obstinacy, and sullenness; as their constitutional levity is productive of frivolity, pertness, unmeaning loquacity, self-conceit, fickleness, and indifference to good or evil. The feelings of the French are more quick and lively; those of the English more deep and permanent: again, their apprehensions have more facility and nicety of observation; our own countrymen have shewn greater strength and comprehension of mind. France has, I am persuaded, produced more clever men than England; but that she has produced more great men than England, cannot be pretended. The mind of a Frenchman is, in general, more easily moved, and by slighter causes; an Englishman's feelings are, for the very reason that they require a greater momentum to bring them out, more steady and more strong. I do not here inquire into the superiority of the French or English character. I only state what I conceive to be the difference with a view to those among the

French, who, setting up an exclusive claim to certain qualities, will not allow others the superiority in things which are totally distinct, and who are ready to grasp all excellence, however incompatible, to themselves. Those who wish to be furnished with facts illustrative of the peculiar manners and character of the French, will find ample materials for this purpose, accompanied with refined and discriminating reflections, in the Travels of our author.

I shall insert only two examples, which may shew the pointed felicity with which Mr. Holcroft has selected his traits of national character. "My wife," says Mr. Holcroft, "was one day buying some fish; and while she was undetermined, the girl said to her—'*Prenez cela, car votre mari est un brave homme.*' My wife replied, —'*Oui, cela se peut bien; mais comment savez vous qu'il est un brave homme?*' '*C'est égal,*' answered the girl, '*cela fait plaisir à entendre.*' This girl's maxim is sound morality wherever I have been in France." The difference between words and things is certainly less marked in France than in England: how far this is an advantage or a disadvantage, I do not, for my own part, pretend to decide.

The other story is highly honourable too, as well as characteristic of the French. Their humanity, whatever else we may think of it, costs them less than it does the English.

"A poor musician, who usually brought a small pianoforte in the afternoon to the *Champs Elysées*, and played, that those who were pleased

might reward him by a trifle, having played in vain one evening, was sorrowfully retiring home. He was seen by Elleviou (a famous actor), remarked, and questioned. The poverty and ill success of the wandering musician moved the pity of the actor, who desired the instrument might again be put down; and stepping aside, he said he would return instantly. His wife and friend had passed on, and he brought them back. It was nearly dark. Pradere, his friend, sat down to the pianoforte, and accompanied Elleviou, who began to sing, to the astonishment of numbers that were soon assembled. The men had drawn the hat over the brow: Madame Elleviou put down her veil, and went round to collect; the pleasingness of her manner, the little thankful curtsies she dropt to all who gave, the whiteness of her hand, and the extraordinary music they heard, rendered the audience so liberal, that she made several *tours*, and none ineffectually. Elleviou, however, could not long remain unknown; and finding themselves discovered, Madame Elleviou gave all, and it was supposed, more than all, she had collected from the crowd, to the poor musician: the sum amounted to thirty shillings; and among the pence and halfpence there were crown pieces, which no doubt were given by the actors. The feelings of the scene as the audience dispersed, are not easily to be described. The unexpected relief, afforded to the man who was departing so disconsolate, was great indeed: but it was forgotten in the charming behaviour of those who

relieved him, in their almost divine music, and in the strangeness of the adventure. The surrounding people were scarcely less moved; so kind an act from a man in such high public estimation, excited more than admiration; and the tears of gratitude, shed by the musician, drew sympathizing drops from many of the spectators. This event gave birth to two new musical pieces, which were both successful."

This was certainly an action of which an Englishman is incapable, but to which every Englishman will give his warmest tribute of applause. When people dispute and cavil about one another's actions, it is only because there is something wrong or absurd on both sides.

The Travels through France, &c. were published by Phillips, and Mr. Holcroft received 150*l.* for the copy-right.

After Mr. Holcroft's return from the Continent, in the *autumn* of 1802,[1] almost the first undertaking in which he embarked was the establishment of a printing-house, in connexion with his brother-in-law, Mercier. Mr. Holcroft found unexpected difficulties in this business, owing to the want of sufficient capital to carry

[1] The original text says "summer of 1803." He was certainly in Paris, May, 1801–Sept., 1802. (*Travels*, 1: 245.) Lamb wrote to Thomas Manning from London, 24 Sept., 1802 (*Letters*, Ainger ed., p. 232), saying, "Holcroft is not yet come to town." Hazlitt said in a letter to his father, 16th October, 1802, "Holcroft is in London." (*The Hazlitts*, Edinburgh, 1911, p. 412.)

it on. Meeting also with many heavy losses in publications which he undertook to print on his own account, he found himself under the necessity, in order to satisfy the pressing demands of his creditors, to dispose of the printing-office, having previously obtained his partner's consent to do so.

Mr. Holcroft brought out six dramatic pieces while he was abroad, or after his return to England: Deaf and Dumb, The Escapes, Hear both Sides, a Tale of Mystery, the Lady of the Rock, and lastly, The Vindictive Man. All of them, except the last, were successful.

[Shortly afterward (29th January, 1802) he exhibited at Drury Lane, a moral, sentimental comedy, "Hear Both Sides." It had a temporary, and neither more nor less than a just, success. The dialogue was sufficiently spirited, and the characters sufficiently interesting, to avert immediate condemnation; but there were faults in the structure of the drama, improbabilities in the events, and a weariness arising from the explication of some unintelligible combinations in the plot, which were of abundant power to prevent it from being a permanent favourite. The author, rendered sour, perhaps, by occasional failures, and sensitive by harsh and wanton attacks, complains, in his preface, of the manner in which the diurnal critics had treated his play, terming it a sombre, (that was their word, as Pamela says) sermonizing drama. With great dexterity, he turns these censures to his own credit, by saying, that such paragraphs ought not to have been addressed to him, but to the successive audiences who had received

the comic parts with bursts of laughter, and the serious scenes with deep attention and unceasing applause.

Among the comic parts on which the author rests his title to fame, the most prominent is that of Transit, played by Bannister; one of those medleys of desperate need and prodigal liberality, of hopeless circumstances and unextinguishable hilarity, to which that actor could always impart a lively interest that would make us swallow gross improbabilities, and witness, without disapprobation, a departure from all the general rules by which man regulates his conduct. He also delivered a prologue, written by the author, in which alluding to a late aerial expedition and descent by means of a parachute, the slight distinction is shown which exists between Rashness and Enterprise, until success or failure assigns to an act the accepted denomination.[1]]

Those which became the greatest favourites with the public, were, Deaf and Dumb, and the Tale of Mystery, a melodrama.

[The Tale of Mystery was called a melo-drama, and comprised speaking, music, and dumb show. As well by the interest of the fable and the merit of the writing, as by the great skill and ability of the performers, it became a general favourite. Many pieces afterward appeared under the same denomination; but it may safely be pronounced that "The Tale of Mystery," as it was the first, so it is uncomparably the best melo-drama that the English stage has produced.][2]

[1] From *Memoirs of John Bannister, Comedian.* By John Adolphus, Esq., 2: 98–9.

[2] *Ibid.*, 2: 98. On August 2, 1802, H. Harris, the

Yate.. Wilkinson Esq.

A

TALE

OF

MYSTERY,

A MELO-DRAME:

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN.

BY THOMAS HOLCROFT.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY R. PHILLIPS, 71, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

1802.

Printed by Thomas Davison, White-friars.

(Price Two Shillings.)

Both of these are certainly exquisite in their kind, but of the first it is not too much to say, that it is one of the most beautiful and affecting stories that ever was exhibited on any stage. It

theatrical manager, wrote from Paris: "At le Port St. Martin, an entirely novel species of entertainment is performed; called melodrama—mixing, as the name implies (*mêler-drame*), the drama and *ballêt* of action; which latter it will probably supercede. Holcroft, I understand, has translated one of these pieces for Covent Garden, and it will shortly be produced under the title of *The Tale of Mystery*." *Life and Times of Frederick Reynolds*, by himself. London, 1826, 2: 346. Cumberland's *British Theatre* had the following remarks to make (vol. viii): "A Tale of Mystery is not among the worst melodramas that have passed under our review. It is sufficiently interesting and terrible. The story is, a brother conspiring against the life of a brother. The author has been merciful with regard to *diablerie*. We miss the usual complement of ghosts, robbers, and trap-doors. The dialogue is passable, the characters are not preposterous, the scenes are varied and striking, and the music is appropriate and impressive.

"The tragic ending of this piece is relieved by the introduction of a garrulous old domestic, excellently performed by Mrs. Davenport; and an honest, compassionate miller, equally well sustained by Mr. Blanchard. The scene where Michelli's involuntary kindness works upon the assassin Romaldi, is powerfully conceived. The author is Mr. Thomas Holcroft, a man sufficiently notorious as a political character, and of whom we shall have occasion to speak further, when we come to a work better worthy of his genius than A Tale of Mystery." For the financial success of this play, see *Notes and Queries*, 146: 40.

is taken from the French play of M. Bouilly, which was itself founded on an incident in the life of the famous Abbe de l'Epée, instructor of the Deaf and Dumb.[1]

Julio, the heir of the lord of Harancour, who is born deaf and dumb, is left an orphan, when he is only eight years old; and the helplessness of his situation suggesting the possibility of getting rid of him, he is taken from Thoulouse to Paris by his guardian and maternal uncle, assisted by a servant in the family, and there lost in the streets at night. Dupre, the accomplice of his uncle Darlemont, swears to his death; and at the return home, Darlemont is invested with the estates and honours of the house of Harancour. Meantime, poor Julio is found in the streets of Paris in a coarse dress, which does not denote him to be any thing but a beggar; and it being discovered that he is deaf and dumb, he is taken to the asylum of the Abbe de l'Epée for children who are born with this defect. The melancholy observed in his countenance and manner, the delicacy of his complexion, and other circumstances, soon lead to a suspicion that he is the child of rich parents, and has been purposely lost by some person who wished to usurp his rights. He is taught the use of artificial signs,

[1] Nine successive nights at Drury Lane, beginning 24th February, 1801, then twenty-four more before the end of 1803. There is no record of payment at all, either to Holcroft or to "Herbert Hill." Once played by royal command. (British Museum, *Add. MSS.*, 29,710.)

and learns to read and write. One day being with De l'Epée, when a judge is passing by dressed in his full robes, Julio is violently agitated, and makes signs to his instructor, that his father used to be dressed in this manner. Another time, passing through the Barriere d'Enfer, the recollection suddenly struck him that this was the very gate through which he entered Paris. This produced a conviction in the mind of L'Epée that he came from some city in the South of France, of which in all likelihood his father had been chief magistrate. Yet how to proceed in his behalf? The youth had never heard his father's name, he did not know his family, or the place of his birth. After some ineffectual researches, De l'Epée resolves at last to take his pupil with him, and traverse in person and on foot the whole of the south of France. They embrace each other, invoke the protection of heaven, and set forward. After a journey, long, fatiguing, hopeless, they at length arrive at the gates of Thoulouse. Julio knows the place, seizes his benefactor's hand, and uttering wild cries of joy, leads him quickly, here and there, through various quarters of the city. At last they come to the square in which the palace of Harancour stood; he stops, points to the mansion, shrieks, and falls senseless into the arms of L'Epée. This is the foundation of the story, the rest may be easily divined by the reader.—It may; but, to save the trouble of putting on a conjuring-cap it may be told in a few words. By the honourable perseverance of the good

Abbe, the spirited intervention of a noble-minded avocat, the accumulation of collateral proof, and the confession of an agent in the crime, the guilty Darlemont is driven from all the defences which his caution had provided. Convinced that the wealth he possesses, and the influence he boasts, cannot ensure his success in a trial; that perseverance in the path which pride and obstinacy indicate, will only lead to exposure and infamy; he yields after a violent internal conflict, acknowledges the identity and rights of his nephew, and surrenders the estate he has so long usurped. A marriage, and a cession of half the property by the amiable orphan, form a happy termination of the piece.

[It is impossible for the dramatic art to exceed the excellences which marked this performance. Kemble, in De l'Epée was a model of a new species of character. Tranquil in himself, yet carried by virtue alone to the highest pitch of heroic action, he is benevolent, not only without ostentation, but with an apparent unconsciousness that he is stepping beyond the limits usually attained by the followers of humanity and piety; his zealous affection for the orphan is pure as that which a guardian angel might be supposed to display toward the frail being committed by Providence to his care; his narrative of the child's introduction to him, and the progress of his judgment in discovering his origin and place of nativity, is free from every trace of egotism or vanity; not a sentence, not a syllable, invites or even permits a compliment to his generosity or his sagacity. In advancing the just claims of his unfortunate pupil,

he seems to be borne above the region of human weakness or passion; his remonstrance is free from rage, his reasoning undefaced by taunt or sarcasm. Yet, notwithstanding the absence of all these resources which are so often used to excite the feelings of an audience, every word he uttered produced a corresponding emotion of the heart; all was sympathy, approbation, delight in tracing the course of this character. With the highest efforts of Kemble's histrionic genius,—with his Hamlet, Macbeth, and Rolla,—may justly be ranked the unobtrusive energetic, patient, persevering, benevolent Abbe de l'Epée.

In Darlemont, Wroughton displayed a treasure of dramatic power, which they who had not known him in his earlier days would hardly believe him to possess. He represented a man in whom a factitious bubble, composed of pride, self-will, anger, and obstinacy,—miscalled honour,—is substituted for that firm, generous, manly principle, the dignified offspring of innocence and virtue, which truly and only deserves the name. His struggles between conscious guilt and inflated pride, the fear of detection and the hope of impunity, produced an interesting exhibition; and I have been well informed, that Mr. Fox, whose taste and judgment none could doubt, and whose experience gave additional value to his opinion, declared that he had never witnessed a performance more perfect than that of Mr. Wroughton.

But the interesting cause of all these efforts, the deaf and dumb Julio, remains to be mentioned. In this part, Miss De Camp carried the public sensibility to the highest point, and evinced her own correct judgment and impressive feeling. Forbidden the use of speech, or even of an exclamation, she never permitted herself to solicit

applause, by an attitude, a distortion of feature, or the slightest gesture inconsistent with the chaste simplicity befitting her character. In using the mode of communicating her ideas, and acknowledging her perceptions, which the Abbe had taught her, everything was natural, easy, graceful: no cunning look of self-applause, no nod, no wink, no pointing of the finger, none of the tricks, in short, which a vulgar-minded performer would have delighted in, disgraced her representation; her love, her gratitude, her obedience, were shown by natural and impressive gestures; and, as the first glimmer of discovery expanded into the full blaze of irresistible conviction, her manner, her action, her looks, all beamed forth additional sensibility and joy. After her incomparable dumb performance, the audience listened with pleasure to the tones of her sweet voice in a smart epilogue.

Dupre, the part assigned to Bannister, was a servant of Darlemont, the accomplice and agent of his crime. A wounded conscience, a sincere repentance, and a conviction that it may be useful in terminating the sufferings of innocence, impel him, after some scenes of lamentation and reproach, to make a full disclosure; thus confirming all antecedent discoveries. The part was altogether unworthy of Bannister, and he resigned it after the first season.

Savage indeed must the prejudice have been which could resist the charms with which this piece assailed the mind. The story, the sentiment, the interest, the gradual and judicious development of the final event, all contributed to produce an impulsive sensation not to be resisted by minds in the slightest degree capable of a virtuous emotion. The performers did more than

justice to their parts; they entered into them with the ardour of poets, and appeared to have studied them with the fondness of parents.[1]]

The Vindictive Man was the last, and certainly not the best of Mr. Holcroft's dramatic productions. It was condemned at Drury-lane. From the state of his circumstances at the time, this failure was felt as a severe blow, by the author. With what feelings he bore it, may be learned from a short, but beautiful dedication of the play to Miss Holcroft.

"TO MY DAUGHTER FANNY.

"To you, my dear, I inscribe this comedy, because you approve, nay, was partial enough to admire the scenes, progressively, as they were written, and the play, when it became a whole. I inscribe it to you, because you have dedicated your talents, by your literary efforts, to the cause of morality, and have need of that patient resignation to which every writer is doomed. I inscribe it to you, and in this sense to my whole family, with sympathetic tenderness, as a solitary testimony of true and ardent affection: as such, I am well persuaded you will all receive it, though it has been publicly condemned. You will remember the giver; and the gift, though barren, will be welcome."

Besides the plays which have been enumerated,

[1] From *Memoirs of John Bannister, Comedian.* By John Adolphus, Esq., 2: 73–9.

Mr. Holcroft, after his return to England, published "the Theatrical Recorder," in two volumes, a small volume of Poems, called "Tales in Verse," and the novel of "Brian Perdue."

Mr. Holcroft, at the time of the failure of his last play, had several dramatic, as well as other manuscripts in hand, which, had he been allowed to finish them, would have easily relieved him from his temporary embarrassments. He had however a young and increasing family to maintain; and the ill health, with which he had long struggled, now increased fast upon him, and rendered all his efforts vain.[1]

Mr. Holcroft had, for nearly a year, been so much troubled with an asthma, as to render walking difficult to him. He was not, however, confined to his house till about half a year before his death. His disorder was violent spasms, accompanied with spitting of blood, and an enlargement of the heart, occasioned, as was supposed, by continual anxiety. It was during the two last months of his illness, when he could no longer rise from his bed, and when every effort to speak was almost convulsive, that he dictated the account of his own life, which has been inserted in the beginning of these volumes. Let it remain a proof of the energy of his

[1] In 1804 he had drawn only 100*l.* for *The Lady of the Rock* months after it appeared (11th Feb.–17th Nov.). *The Vindictive Man* (20th Nov., 1806) was played but twice, and Holcroft received merely the customary 33*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* for each night. (British Museum, *Add. MSS.*, 29,710.)

character, and of that superiority of the mind over the body, which was one of his strongest sentiments. Through the whole time he discovered a fortitude in suffering which has rarely been equalled: nor did he till the very last relinquish the hopes of recovering. If any thing could exceed the patient courage with which he passed through this trying scene, it was the affectionate, unwearied assiduity with which Mrs. Holcroft attended him night and day, through the whole. For the last six weeks, she scarcely once quitted his bed-side for a quarter of an hour together. The task was one, to which duty and affection were alone equal. In any other circumstances, her strength would have failed under such exertions: but Mr. Holcroft was not satisfied unless she was with him, and that consideration prevailed over every other. Colonel Harwood, his son-in-law, was with him from the Sunday evening before he died; on which day, his physicians, Dr. Buchan and Dr. Hooper, had given him over. Many of the following particulars are taken from Colonel Harwood's account.

There was not the shortest interval in which he was not in complete possession of himself. The only slight indication to the contrary was that he once said to the Colonel, "I have great difficulty sometimes in rousing my mind; therefore, if at any time I stop in speaking to you, do you remember my last word, and join it to the next that I shall afterwards say to you." This however rather implied his strong efforts

to preserve his intellects, than the failure of them. His stopping at any time in the midst of a sentence appeared to be always owing to the difficulty of articulation, rather than the loss of memory. When he was so far gone, that it was difficult to understand him, he desired those who were with him to repeat his words, that he might be sure they were heard, and then nodded assent.

On Sunday he expressed a wish to see Mr. Godwin, but when he came, his feelings were overpowered. He could not converse, and only pressed his hand to his bosom, and said, "My dear, dear friend!" On Monday, he again wished to see Godwin, and all his friends that could be sent to: but he had not strength sufficient to hold a conversation: he could only take an affectionate leave, and then he said, he had nothing more to do in this world. He afterwards frequently spoke, or moved his lips as taking a most affectionate leave. A little before he died, he called for wine, and refused it from every hand that held it to him, till his eldest daughter took it into hers, he then bowed his head to her, and drank it; thus, in some way or other, shewing signs of regard to all, till his last moments approached. Hearing a noise of children on the stairs, he said to his wife, "Are those *your* children, Louisa?" as if he was already disengaged from human ties. On Thursday night, about half past eleven, he seemed in great pain, and said to Mrs. Holcroft, "*How tedious.* My affections are strong." It was

thought from this that it would be a relief to his feelings, that they should retire: they all went into the next room, Colonel Harwood still keeping his eye upon him; but seeing his struggles increase, and being desirous to spare his wife and daughter a sight they could not have borne, he returned into the bed-room, and gradually shut and fastened the doors, which Mr. Holcroft observing, shewed evident signs of satisfaction. And seeming then easier, he smiled, and fixing his eyes on his friend, took them no more from him, till they were closed for ever.—Thus died a great and good man, who shewed in the last and most trying scene of all the same firmness of mind, and warmth of affection, which had distinguished him through life.[1]

Mr. Holcroft died on Thursday, the 23rd of March, 1809, at the age of 63.[2]

The following is the report which Dr. A. P. Buchan, and Mr. A. Carlisle, favoured Colonel

[1] Place says of the death of James Mill: "He was all the time as much of a bright reasoning man as ever he was, reconciled to his fate, brave and calm to an extent which I never before witnessed, except in another old friend, Thomas Holcroft, the day before and the day of his death." (*The Life of Francis Place*, by Graham Waller, p. 93.)

[2] "Thomas Holcroft, buried Apl. 1st, 1809. He died at his house in Clipstone Street, on the 23rd of March, 1809, and was buried in the larger cemetery at Marylebone; there is no memorial for him." (Daniel Lyson's *Environs of London*, Supplement to 1st ed., p. 233.)

Harwood with, who also attended the examination.

"*London, March 24th*, 1809.

"*Statement of the Anatomical Inspection of Mr. Thomas Holcroft, aged* 63.

"The examination took place twenty-four hours after decease. The body was considerably emaciated, and slightly anasarcous throughout. An extensive cicatrix at the upper part of the sternum, and at the junction of the neck with the breast, indicated some long continued chronic abscesses. The cavity of the abdomen contained about a pint of dropsical water. The stomach, intestines, mesenteric glands, kidneys, and bladder, were free from diseased structure. The liver was about twice the natural bulk, hard and tuberculated on its surfaces. The peritoneal covering of this viscuous substance was marked by numerous opake spots, where the membrane was drawn into folds, and this appearance seemed to characterize a series of inflammations. The interior texture of the liver was tuberculated. The gall-bladder was much distended. The outer surface of the spleen had much of the appearance displayed by the liver. The cavities of the thorax contained about two quarts of dropsical water. The lungs were soft, and their air-cells free. The heart was large, and bore the relaxed character which often occurs after a long-continued laborious circulation. The coronary arteries had begun to ossify. The arch of the aorta was dilated, approaching to

aneurism, and the texture of its coats had become hard and inelastic. The descending aorta and the primary iliac arteries had become completely ossified in several parts, and were unduly dilated. From the facts here adduced, it may be considered, that the diseased structure of the liver, and of the heart, and its principal arteries, led to the dropsy of the chest, which might be the immediate cause of death, although in a frame so disorganized, life could not have been much longer protracted. Whether the disease of the liver preceded that of the heart and its vessels, or the contrary, and whether they were distinct diseases, and which of these led most decidedly to the fatal event, are subjects for uncertain speculation."

NOTE

[*The "Letters to and from the author" which appeared at the end of the edition of* 1816 *have been inserted at the various places in the text where they properly belong. One only is excepted: this, from Madame de Genlis, is inserted in my Bibliography under "Sacred Dramas,* 1786."]

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

AS complete a bibliography of Holcroft as the present editor was able to bring together in nine years of investigation has been published in pamphlet form by the New York Public Library, covering all details as to publications, reviews, critiques, theatrical performances, and periodical contributions which it was possible to collect in that time. It is not complete—few bibliographies ever are—but those who desire to secure more extensive data on detailed points may find there much to keep them occupied.

The *Memoirs* themselves were first published in the following form :

> Memoirs/of the late/Thomas Holcroft./ Written by Himself,/and continued/to the time of his death,/from his diary,/notes, and other papers./ In three volumes./ Vol. I./ London :/Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and/Brown, Paternoster-Row./1816 12mo. I., viii+1–300 ; II., 2+1–283 ; III., 2+1–320 pp.

The volume bore a frontispiece portrait of Holcroft, full face, holding his spectacles in his

hand. This is probably the portrait by Opie, of which Mrs. Inchbald said: "It is absolute identity." (Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald*, 1 : 152).

The engraving bears the legend: "Blood Sculpt./Thomas Holcroft./London. Published for Longman & Co., April 8th, 1816."

Watt, in the *Bibliotheca Britannica*, gives the date of publication of these *Memoirs* as 1815; but they are listed as published in April, 1816, in the 1st May, 1816, number of *The Monthly Magazine* (41 : 339). The work was in the "Monthly List of Publications" in the April, 1816, number of *The British Critic* (Ser. II, Vol. V, p. 449). It was announced as "nearly ready for publication" in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for March, 1816 (which, however, says it is by "John Hazlett," 86 : 252) and reviewed in the April, 1816, number of the same periodical (86 : 341–342). It was not reviewed in *The European Magazine* until July, 1816 (70 : 54), which did not even mention Hazlitt's name. *The Quarterly Review* for April, 1816 (15 : 293), has it among a list of "New Publications," and *The Edinburgh Review* for June, 1816 (26 : 493), among a "Quarterly List of New Publications" covering the months from March to June. It is to be noted that Hazlitt's *ADVERTISEMENT* is dated January, 1810; and that Lamb wrote to Manning on 2nd January, 1810: "Holcroft had finished his life when I wrote to you, and Hazlitt has since finished his life; I do not mean his own life, but he has finished a life of Holcroft,

which is going to press." (*Works of Charles Lamb*, ed. Fitzgerald, 1876, 2 : 239).

The *Memoirs* were republished in slightly abridged form in mid-century, in two volumes of the *Traveller's Library* (numbers 16 and 17 at 1s. apiece) as follows :

> The Traveller's Library, Complete in Twenty-Five Volumes. Vol. 17. Biography and History, Vol. IV. Holcroft. Arago. Chesterfield. Selwyn. London : Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans. 1856.

That is the title page to the bound volume : the " Vol. 17 " referring to the place of the whole volume in the whole *Traveller's Library ;* and the " Vol. IV " referring to the place of the volume in the section of the *Traveller's Library* especially devoted to " Biography and History."

The title pages of the Holcroft's *Memoirs* in this printing read as follows :

> Price one shilling. The Traveller's Library. 16. Holcroft's Memoirs, Written by himself, and continued to his death from his diary and other papers. New Edition. Part I. London : Longmans, Brown, Green, and Longmans. 1852. Octavo. I., 6 (titles, including pamphlet cover) + 2 + 7–156 ; II., 4 (titles, including pamphlet cover) + 157–315 pp. [The title page of Part II., No. 17, is the same except for the change in roman and arabic numerals for Part and Volume.]

In:

> The Collected Works of William Hazlitt, edited by A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover, with an introduction by W. E. Henley . . . 1902. London: J. M. Dent & Co. McClure Phillips & Co.: New York. Octavo,

there was reprinted in volume two (vi–x + 1–281 pp.) the *Memoirs of the late Thomas Holcroft*, in the original form, and with many explanatory notes on the text. This was preceded by a bibliographical note, which said of the original edition:

> "Vol. I. contains Book I. (Mr. Holcroft's Narrative) and Book II.; Vol. II. contains Book III. and seven chapters of Book IV., in the last chapter of which Mr. Holcroft's Diary begins (June 22nd–July 18th, 1798); Vol. III. opens without any reference to a 'Book' and heads the conclusion of the Diary (July 19th, 1798–March 12th, 1799), Chap. I. In the present edition [W–G, 1902] it has seemed well to ignore this arbitrary 'Chap. I.' heading, to run the Diary straight on, and to head Chap. II in the 3rd vol. Chap. VIII., thus completing Book IV. The remainder of Vol. III. after this chapter is occupied by *Letters to and from the author*.
>
> "It will be seen that a delay of six years took place between the date of Hazlitt's *Advertisement* and the publication of the volumes.

> Mr. W. C. Hazlitt writes: 'These *Memoirs* were never, in spite of all the lapse of time, completely printed; only three volumes out of four were printed.' Every endeavour to find this fourth has failed."

In W. C. Hazlitt's *Memoirs of William Hazlitt* (1 : 179), it is said:

> "The 'Life Everlasting' was finished this year (1810), so far as it was ever finished (for the fourth volume is still in MS.)"

In P. P. Howe's *Life of Hazlitt* (p. 124n.), it is said:

> "Fortunately when the book did appear, it did so (so far as we can judge) as it left the hands of Hazlitt. For Mr. W. C. Hazlitt's statement that he did not finish it there is no warranty which is discoverable."

The two gentlemen are quite apparently talking at cross purposes. As to whether they are talking of Hazlitt having finished his task, or of the book being completely printed as it was prepared for the press, or of the manuscript being deleted in places here and there and documents suppressed—we cannot exactly say. Only the two gentlemen could determine that in a conversational exchange of opinions. We can at least see, however, that Hazlitt did leave many blank spots in the manuscript, which a young American army officer has had an interesting time filling in. We can also be certain that even more extensive material was omitted. During

the progress of work upon the book, which occasioned some correspondence between Hazlitt and William Godwin, Godwin wrote concerning "the manuscript life of Mr. Holcroft" directly to Mrs. Holcroft, making strong objections against the insertion of the Diary and quoting many specific instances which do not appear in it, in its printed form. These were omitted. It seems the fate of the scholar to find his task forever unfinished. Again a publication on Holcroft must close with a question mark: "Where are they now?"

INDEX

" Acquitted felons," I, xxxv ; II, 53, 73, 77, 79
Actor, The, I, 196
Adair, Sir Robert, II, 123, 171, 220, 247
Adams, Daniel, II, 65
Addison, Joseph, I, 90–1
Aickin, II, 185, 189, 194
Akenside, I, 173
Aldridge's, horse centre, II, 134
Alwyn, or the Gentleman Comedian, I, xxiv, 265 ; II, 85
  autobiographical incidents in, I, 121, 123, 154–6, 177–8, 180, 220, 221, 226
  dedication, to Sheridan, quoted, I, 184
  manner of composition, I, 219, 224
  publication, I, 220
  résumé, I, 220–6
Analytical Review, The, I, xxv, xxxv, 281, 282 ; II, 2
Anna St. Ives, I, xxii, xxvii–xxix ; II, 3–11, 19, 20, 82, 193
Annual Register, The, I, 119 ; II, 59
Anti-Jacobin, The, I, lii
Armstrong, II, 122, 155, 179
Arne, I, 194
Arnold's *Psalmody*, I, 94–5, 114
Artist, The, I, l
Aspin, the publisher, II, 203
Atkins, Mrs., II, 230
Atlas, the horse, I, 48–50
Attwood, Thomas, II, 105, 180, 242
Aurelio and Miranda, II, 227
Austin, Wm., I, xxxviii, xl ; II, 31

Badhams, I, liv

Bage, Holcroft on, I, xxviii
Baker, Sir George, II, 136
Ballantyne, Jas., I, xxxix
Banks, II, 139, 156, 180, 189, 249
Banks, Sir Joseph, II, 144, 197
Banks, Miss, II, 204, 207
Bannister, John, II, 97–8, 102, 112, 180–1, 183–4, 187, 196, 306
  his memoirs, quoted, II, 299–300, 304–6
Barkley, Sir Robt., II, 241
Barlow, Joel, II, 33
Barry, the painter, II, 235
Barry, Col., II, 149, 173, 177, 178, 182, 217, 240, 248
Bartlett, II, 217–19
Bates, John, I, 172, 173
Bates, Mrs. John, *née* Harrop, I, 173
Bates, II, 217
Bath Easton Vase, I, 196
Battle of Hexham, The, I, 267
Beaumarchais, Caron de. See *Mariage de Figaro*
Beaumont, II, 167–8
Beddoes, II, 215–16
Bedford, Duke of, II, 229, 242
Beechey, Sir Wm., II, 148, 157, 187, 220, 222–3
Bell, the publisher, II, 193
Benfield, II, 139, 236, 244
Bentley, Thos., II, 197
Beresford, II, 123, 163
Berkenhout, Mrs., II, 176, 177–8
Berquin, Arnauld, I, 277
Betting, I, 49, 108–12
Bezeley, II, 226
Bible—
  reading in, I, 9, 18, 88
  purchasing copies of, II, 131
Birch, Mr., picture restorer, II, 159, 187
Birch, II, 228, 241
Birmingham, I, 150
Black, Dr., II, 144, 241
Blake, Arthur, II, 60–1

Blake, William, I, xviii; II, 31
Boaden, Jas., II, 189
his *Inchbald*, I, xix
his *Aurelio and Miranda*, II, 227
Bond, Oliver, II, 166, 170
Bone, II, 183–4
Bonner, Charles, I, 275; II, 222
Bonneville, de, I, xxvi, 262, 263, 272–3, 275–6, 307; II, 106
Bonney, II, 62
Booth, I, 158, 162, 170–1, 172, 211, 245
Bosville, II, 189, 191
Boswell, Jas., Holcroft on, II, 135, 137, 140, 143, 151, 154–5, 158, 163, 167, 171–3
Bouilly, II, 302
Bourgeois, Sir Francis, II, 150, 157, 187, 196, 236, 241
Bouverie, II, 169
Boyd, II, 139, 244
Brailsford, H. N., I, xvi; II, 34
Breton, II, 219, 242
Brian Perdue, I, xxix, l; II, 308
Briddell, II, 141–2
British Critic, The, II, 316
Brookes, II, 192
Brothers, II, 245–7
Brown, Mr., of Norwich, II, 153
Browne, W. G., II, 242, 244, 249
Buchan, Dr., II, 309
Buller, Judge, II, 161
Buller, II, 191
Bunyan, John, I, 93; II, 92
Burdett, Sir Francis, II, 196, 200, 203, 220
Burke, Edmund, II, 73, 75, 76, 148
Burns, II, 240
Burrell, II, 139, 143
Busby, I, 173

Calderon de la Barca's *Fortune Mends*, I, liii
Cambridge, I, 17

Cambridge Intelligencer, The, II, 169
Camelford, Baron, I, xlv; II, 233
Camp, The, I, xx
Canning, II, 208
Cannock Heath, I, 31–2
Cannon, and his dining club, I, 209
Canterbury, I, 192
Careless, the Horse, I, 48–50
Carlisle, Sir Anthony, II, 125, 137, 143, 144, 180, 186, 187, 194, 203, 208, 311
Carlyle, Thos., I, liv
Carmarthen, Lord, I, 250
Caroline of Lichtfield, I, xxvii, 258
Castle, Spectre, The, II, 99
Catuelan, Count de, I, 262
Cawdron, Mr., II, 48
Celenio's *Baron*, translated, I, liii
Chartres, Duke and Duchess of, I, 262
Cheap Living, II, 193
Cheevers, Wm., I, 65, 66
Cheshire, I, 36; II, 112
Chester, I, 141
Chevy Chace, I, 34
Childers, the horse, I, 47
Choleric Fathers, The, I, 207, 265, 270–1
Christie's, picture room, II, 196, 197, 234, 241
Clarke, John, I, 52–9, 62–76, 80–1, 104–6, 114
Clarke, Tom, I, 68, 75
Clementi, Muzio, I, 152; II, 110, 138, 166, 190, 217, 221–2, 228, 245
Clerfayt, II, 144–5
Clive, Catherine, I, 167
Cœlina—
  quoted, I, xxix
  translated as *Tale of Mystery*, I, xv, xlix
Coigley, II, 140
Cole, II, 40, 285
Cole, Mrs. (Holcroft's daughter), II, 84, 107
Coleridge, I, xviii, xxxix, xl, xlii–xlv
Colles, Mrs. (Cole?), I, 319

Colman, George, I, 230, 244, 265–7
Colman, George, the Younger, II, 122, 125, 132, 250
Compton, the auctioneer, II, 188, 189
Connoisseurs, The, I, 266–7
Constitutional Information, Society for, II, 27, 30, 58, 63, 65–7, 107, 204
Cooke, George Frederick, I, xlv–xlvi
Cooper, Thomas Apthorp, II, 87–9
Copley, Sir Lionel, II, 226, 248
Corneille, II, 147
Cornwallis, II, 192, 217
Corresponding Society, The London, II, 27, 28, 58, 66–7
Courtney, II, 203, 220, 226
Coventry, I, 22, 23
Cowper, I, xxiv
Cowper, Lord, II, 242
Crawford, Dr., I, xxxiii
Crebillon, II, 147
Crewe, Mrs., I, 185, 186, 193
Criminology, I, 45–6, 227–9; II, 190
Crisis, The, I, 184, 186, 187, 207
Critical Review, The, I, 259
Crompton, II, 110
Cumberland, Rich., II, 185–6, 205, 206, 208, 221, 301
Cumberland's *Word for Nature*, II, 205, 206
Cunningham, John, I, 174–6
Cuthell, publisher, II, 127

Damiani, II, 140
Dampierre, Marquis de, I, 262
  letter from, II, 86
Dante, II, 287
Danvers, II, 203
Davenant, Chas., II, 230
Davis, I, 150
Dawson, the Dublin manager, I, 132, 133, 135–7
Day, J. K., II, 235
Deaf and Dumb, I, xlix; II, 287, 299, 302–7
Debrett, John, the publisher, II, 122, 154, 174

Debrett's bookshop, II, 122, 125, 129, 131, 132, 133, 137, 139, 143, 144, 147, 151, 152, 156, 159, 160, 162, 163, 164, 169, 170, 171, 173, 174, 178, 180, 182, 183, 184, 186, 187, 189, 192, 194, 195, 196, 201, 203, 204, 206, 207, 208, 215, 217, 219, 223, 226, 227, 228, 229, 233, 234, 236, 237, 238, 242, 243, 247
Derby, Lord, II, 243
Dermody, Thos., letter to Holcroft, II, 85–6
Deserted Daughter, The, I, xxiii; II, 95–6, 99, 193, 286
De Tott, Memoirs of Baron, I, 258, 265
Devonshire, Duchess of, I, 250, 253; II, 173
Devonshire, Duke of, I, 48; II, 123
Diary, Holcroft's, II, 121 *et seq.*
Dibdin, Charles, I, xxxix, 193
Dibdin, Thos., II, 237
D'Israeli, II, 131, 195
D'Obsonville's book on *Animals*, I, 258
Dr. Last in His Chariot, I, 163, 190
" Down the burn and thru the mead," I, 197–8
Downing, Geo., I, 145–8
Dramas, Holcroft's. See *Maid of the Vale, The Crisis, Shepherdess of the Alps, Duplicity, The Noble Peasant, Ellen, or the Fatal Cave, Figaro, Seduction, German Hotel, School for Arrogance, Road to Ruin, Love's Frailties, Rival Queens, Deserted Daughter, Man of Ten Thousand, Force of Ridicule, Knave or Not? He's Much to Blame, Inquisitor, Indian Exiles, Deaf and Dumb, Escapes, Tale of Mystery, Hear Both Sides, Lady of the Rock, Vindictive Man, Old Clothesman*
Drennan, Wm., II, 241
Drummond, II, 248
Dryden, Holcroft on, I, 173; II, 236
  reference to, I, 242
Duelling, I, xlv; II, 5
Dundas, II, 56, 75, 123, 239
Dunlap, letter to, I, xxxviii; II, 89–91
Duplicity, I, xix
  comments on, I, 233–9, 241
  résumé of, I, 230–1

Durham, I, 172
Du Val, Mr., II, 150
Dyer, George, II, 142, 147, 226

East India Company, I, 122
Eaton, D. I., publisher, II, 45
Edinburgh Review, The, I, xlix; II, 82, 316
Elegy on the Death of Samuel Foote, I, 195
Elephant, the horse, I, 86–7
Ellen, or the Fatal Cave, I, 278
Ely, Isle of, I, 19
Emery, the actor, II, 180
English Review, The, I, xix, xxiii, 241
Errington, Mr., II, 160
Erskine, Thos., II, 49, 57, 69, 220, 228, 248
Escapes, The, II, 299
Este, Parson, II, 131, 182, 203, 219, 220, 241, 242, 247
European Magazine, The, I, xix, 207, 243; II, 316
European Repository, The, II, 285
Exiles, The. See *Indian Exiles* or *Indian in England*
Eyre, Sir James, II, 45

Family Picture, The, I, 247–8
Farington, II, 168–9, 187
Farmer, Richard, II, 166
Farren, Eliz., I, 274; II, 97
"Farren and Fancy," I, xxii
Fatal Curiosity, The, II, 217
Fawcett, I, 173; II, 127
Fawkner, II, 56
Fennier, II, 245
Fenwick, II, 174, 189, 192, 193, 203, 206
Ferries, Col., II, 171
Feudal Times, II, 250
Field, II, 245
Fielding and Walker, publishers, I, 220, 227
Figaro, Le Mariage de, I, xv, xx, xxiii, xxvi, xxxvii, 243, 265, 272–7, 279
Fischer, II, 162–3, 174

Fisher, I, 173
Fittler, II, 194
Fitzpatrick, Gen., II, 171
Fitzwilliam, Earl, II, 123
Floscel, I, 277
Flower, Benj., II, 142–3, 169
Follies of a Day. See *Figaro*
Foote, Saml., I, 127–30, 166, 195, 290; II, 124
Force of Ridicule, The, II, 95
Forester, the horse, I, 86–7
Forster, jun., II, 190–1
Foulkes, Jas., II, 44, 56, 140, 155
Foulkes, Mrs., II, 177, 178, 223
Fox, Chas., II, 192, 226, 247
Francis, II, 131, 189
Francis, his speech of 1784, II, 154
Franklin, Benj., II, 197, 203
Frazer, II, 228, 229
Frederick the Great's *Posthumous Works*, I, xxiii, 280–1
Frederick II, II, 146
Freeman, Mr., Letters of Holcroft to, I, 199–200, 256, 305
French, Holcroft on the—
  political, II, 151
  social, II, 294–8
Frere, Mr., II, 292
Frost, II, 60, 61
Fuseli, II, 150

"Gaffar-Gray," II, 23–5
Gainsborough, II, 169
Gambling, I, xx, xxxvii, 49, 108–12, 151–2, 238; II, 154, 217–19, 228, 229, 243
Gambling, subject of play, I, 231
Games—
  boyhood, I, 41, 74
  billiard, I, xxxvii, 151; II, 125, 129, 152, 156, 182, 186, 188, 228, 229
  chess, II, 136, 150, 152, 156, 176
Garat, II, 147

Garrick, I, 158, 166, 174
Gatton, Borough of, II, 70–1
Geddes, Dr., II, 140, 142
Geiseveiler, II, 132, 144–7, 152, 160, 162, 164, 166, 174, 176, 177, 178, 180, 194
Genlis, Mme. de—
letter to, I, 259–61
letter from omitted, I, xii; II, 313
Sacred Dramas by, I, xxvii
Tales of the Castle by, I, xxvii, 247, 258, 259, 306
translation from, I, xxvi
work of, I, 277
Gentle Shepherd, The, I, 169–70
Gentleman's Magazine, The, II, 316
German Hotel, The, I, 281–2
Gessner, II, 163
Ghosts, Holcroft's attitude toward, I, 100, 103, 104
Gibbs, Vicary, II, 49
Gifford, I, xv, lii
Gill, John, II, 56, 57
Gilleray, cartoonist (Gilray?), II, 160
Gillies, II, 139, 289
Gillies, John, II, 199–200
Girtin, Thos., II, 235
Godfrey, II, 134
Godwin, I, xvii, xviii, xxiii, xxviii, xxx, xxxix, xl, xlv, liii, liv, 304; II, 125, 127, 128, 135, 152, 174, 177, 179, 182, 190, 240, 288, 291, 292, 293, 294, 310, 320
acquaintance with Jew King, II, 202–3
Antonio, play by, I, l
characteristics of, I, xli; II, 84, 88, 106–7, 110–11, 140, 151, 173
Cursory Strictures, by, II, 45
conversation with, II, 231–2
juvenile books by, I, 277
letter by Holcroft to, I, 313–15; II, 60–1
radical, as a, II, 28, 31–3, 169–70
ward of, Cooper, II, 87
Goethe, II, 105, 128, 287
Goldfinch, the character of, I, xvii, xxviii, 294–5, 300–1

Gordon riots, I, 227
Gosset, Dr., II, 167
Grafton, Duke of, I, 60
Gray, Thos., II, 192
Gregory, II, 228, 229
Grenville, II, 192, 247
Greville, Rich. F., I, 186, 249
  an appeal to, I, 205, 245
  letters to, I, 232, 233, 236, 237, 238, 315–18
  letter to, *re* Shield, I, 207
Greville, Mrs., I, 185, 193, 250
Grey, C., II, 236
Griffiths, R., I, xxx; II, 107, 181
Griffiths, jun., II, 170
Gruber, Dr., II, 132, 144–7, 162, 174, 177

Hamburg, II, 116, 153, 179
Handel, the, celebration, I, xxi, 173
Harcourt, Mrs., I, 250
Hardy, Thos., I, xv, xxxiv; II, 28, 35–6, 38, 55–6, 58, 59, 70, 73–4
Hare, II, 192, 208, 219, 229
Harrington, Lord, II, 163
Harris, I, xix, 230, 233, 234–42, 273, 282, 293; II, 135, 174, 176, 177, 194, 222, 226, 227, 230, 234, 240, 242, 243, 245, 300
Harrop, Miss (Mrs. Bates), I, 173
Harts, the Miss, II, 204
Harwood, Maj. and Mrs., I, 314
Harwood, Col. Wm., II, 107, 309
Haslington, II, 112–15
Hastings, Gen., II, 201, 236, 237, 240
Hazlitt, characteristic interpretations by, I, 121, 169, 270, 275, 283–92, 292–3, 298–301; II, 55, 75–6, 79, 116–17, 121–2, 127–8, 294–6
Hazlitt, Characteristics of Hazlitt's work, I, viii, ix, x, xi, xii, xxxvi, liv, lvii–lviii; II, 26
Hear Both Sides, II, 227, 229, 230, 231–2, 234, 240, 242, 243, 287, 299–300
Heath, II, 196

Helvetius, II, 33
Henderson, I, 237
Hereford, I, 143–4
Hermann und Dorothea, II, 287, 294
He's Much to Blame, I, xlviii; II, 95, 104–5, 170
Hinckley, I, 27
Hoare, Prince—
  The Artist, I, l
  contribution by, I, liv
Hodges, II, 168
Hogarth, II, 138, 139
Holbach, II, 33
Holcroft, Fanny, I, lii, liii, 152, 314; II, 132, 135, 188, 190, 204, 207, 229, 230, 234, 291
  dedication to, II, 307
  drawing, II, 235
  married, I, liv
Holcroft, Sophia, II, 250, 291
Holcroft, Thomas—
  acting of, I, xvii, xix, xx, 124, 129, 243, 274
  acting parts of, I, xx, 163, 164, 174, 177–8, 185, 186, 187, 188, 190, 192
  amanuensis of, I, xxxiv, liii; II, 56–7, 206
  anonymity of, I, xxxvii
  atheism of, I, xviii, xxxii–xxxiii, xliii–xlv, 311
  autobiographical writings of, I, xxiii, li, 121, 123; II, 308. See also *Hugh Trevor* and *Alwyn*
  begging, I, 17–18
  birth and parentage, I, 1–4; II, 115–16
  Dublin, projected trip to, I, 244
  Dublin, trip to, I, xvii, 135–7
  father of—
    occupations of, II, 112
    coal seller, I, 32
    cobbler, I, 3, 4, 5, 22, 39, 50, 117
    horse-dealer, I, 5
    mail carrier, I, 99
    pedlar, I, 17, 26, 29
    groom, I, 4
    data concerning, II, 115

Holcroft, Thomas—
French—
knowledge of, I, xxiv
lessons in, I, 98
impressions of the, I, 257, 291
hack-writing by, I, xxiii, xlviii, l
Hamburgh—
departure for, II, 267
reaches, II, 280–2
residence at, II, 285, 287
travels from, II, 292
horseback-riding, I, xxxvii, lii, 6, 9, 12, 59, 78; II, 109, 153, 258
illness of, I, xxxiii, 40, 43; II, 122, 125, 134, 138, 152, 155, 159, 160, 174–6, 178, 180, 187, 308–13
imprisonment of, I, xvi, xxxiv
letters of. *See* Letters
library of, I, xlvii; II, 33, 111, 116, 131, 163, 164, 194, 233, 244, 248, 254
London, arrival in—
first, I, 118
second, I, 179
last, II, 298
Memoirs, writing, I, xviii, lvii–lviii, 1
music, training in and knowledge of, I, xxi, 6–7, 93–6, 107, 118, 142, 163, 184, 193; II, 109, 115, 135, 140, 143, 180, 181, 193
Newgate, in, II, 51, 54–7, 62, 204
pictures, II, 148, 166, 184, 228, 234, 235, 241, 243, 244, 248, 249
pictures, interest in, II, 148–50, 157, 164, 168, 178, 184, 187, 189, 194, 196, 197, 202, 217, 220, 227, 239, 242, 248, 287–9
political principles of, I, xxix–xxx, xxxiv, 248; II, 1–2, 11–19, 26–80, 116–17, 137, 195, 226, 228, 254, 294
presumed political prejudices, II, 97, 99, 101, 102–3, 237, 248
portraits of, II, 149, 315–16. *See also* Opie, II, 240–8
poverty of, in youth, I, 27–8, 40, 50, 118, 142–4, 157–9, 187, 204

Holcroft, Thomas—
reading of, youthful—
general, I, xlvii, 117, 172, 207
ballads, I, 89
Bible, I, 9, 18, 88
Chevy Chace Ballad, I, 34
Crucified Jesus, I, 92
Gulliver's Travels, I, 90–1
Parismus and Parismenes, I, 3, 10
Pilgrim's Progress, I, 93
Saint's Everlasting Rest, I, 92
Seven Champions, I, 3, 10
Spectator, The, I, 90–1
Spira, Life of, I, 93
Whole Duty of Man, I, 92
reform, desire for, I, xxviii, xxxiv
residences in London, I, 204; II, 42, 50, 91, 106
school, at, I, 3, 16, 96–8, 118
shoemaker, as a, I, 118
songs, as a writer of, I, xviii, 207, 275, 306; II, 23–5, 175, 180
spectacles, wearing, II, 149, 255–6, 315
stable-boy, as a, I, 54–114
strolling player, as a, I, viii, xvii, 142–83
teaching school, I, 118
translator, as a, I, xv–xvi, xxvi, 261, 272, 280–1
travels—
first trip to Paris, I, viii, xxiv, 249, 250, 255, 256, 265
second trip to Paris, I, 272–3
third trip to Paris, II, 292–4
verse by, quoted, I, xxii, 160, 162, 263–4; II, 23, 25
walking, as a man, I, xxx, xxxvii; II, 152, 171, 178, 180, 184, 186, 188, 194, 242
as a small boy, I, 11, 36
as a strolling player, I, 143, 172
warrant for the arrest of, II, 48–51
Holland, Lord, II, 226, 227, 228
Holman's *Votary of Wealth*, II, 230
Homer, II, 287
Hooper, Dr., II, 309

Hopetour, Lord, II, 200
Hopkins, the prompter, I, 185, 186, 187
Hopkins, the Misses, I, 186
Horse-racing, I, 46–9, 50–114
Horses, race-, traits of, I, 67–9, 87
Hudibras, I, 140
Hugh Trevor—
autobiographical passages in, I, 13, 176, 181–2, 190–2, 206, 220, 237, 242, 253–5, 302; II, 64
French critique on, II, 238–9
Hazlitt on, I, 247
Jeffrey, F., on, II, 82
publishers, the, and, II, 193
Robinson, Crabb, on, II, 82
Hugh Trevor, I, xxii, xxiii, xxvii–xxix; II, 20–5, 122, 178
Hughes, Mr., of Portsmouth or Plymouth, I, 192
Hughes, Rich., Holcroft's letter to, I, 200–1
Human Happiness, or The Skeptic, I, 195, 251
publication and critique, I, 247–8
Hunter, John, Dr., I, xxxiii; II, 39

Inchbald, Mrs.—
quarrel with, I, xl
visits Newgate, II, 57
acting of, I, xix, xx, 230
contribution by, I, liv
friend of, a, II, 136
Lover's Vows, by, II, 182, 188
Nature and Art, by, II, 82
strolling player, as a, I, 170
Indian Exiles, II, 184, 186, 189, 194, 196
Inquisitor, The, II, 105, 125, 126, 129, 130, 131, 132, 134, 135, 151–2
Instinct, Holcroft's opinions on, I, 316, 317
Irish insurrection of 1798, II, 122–3, 131, 132, 134, 139, 140, 152, 155–6, 159, 161–2, 164, 166, 170, 173, 174, 196, 201, 203, 223, 242
Irish union, the, II, 236, 238, 239, 240, 241, 243
Irishmen, I, 36–8, 134–5, 140–1; II, 240, 242

Jeffrey, Francis, I, xviii, xlix, lii; II, 82
Jew and the Doctor, The, II, 223
"John Gilpin's Ride," I, xxiv
"Johnny and Mary," I, 197–8
Johnson, Saml. *See* Boswell
Johnson, the publisher, II, 127, 174, 196
Johnstone, I, 60
Jonson, Ben, I, xxiv
Jordan, J. S., the publisher, I, xli
Jordan, Mrs., the actress, II, 125
Joseph II, Emperor, II, 146
Joyce, Jeremiah, II, 62, 63, 66, 67, 79, 236
Julius Cæsar, I, xx

Kant, conversations *re*, I, xlii; II, 133, 174
Kelly, II, 194
Kelly, Count, II, 244
Kembles, the, I, 144–5, 149, 150; II, 97, 157, 168, 182, 188
Kemble, Miss (Mrs. Whitelocke), I, 219
Kendal, I, 162, 221, 223
Kenny, Jas., I, liv
King, Thos., I, 194–5
King, Mr., I, 205
King's auctions, II, 152, 163, 164, 166, 187, 194, 233
King, John ("Jew"), II, 202–3
Kippis, Dr., II, 158
Klopstock, II, 286
Knapp, II, 48
Knave or Not? II, 95, 99–104, 191, 193
Knight, Thos., I, lii; II, 237, 242, 243
Knutsford, II, 116
Kotzebue, II, 184. See also *The Stranger*, *Lover's Vows*, and *Indian Exiles*
Kyd, Stewart, II, 62–3, 66, 67

Lacy, II, 219
Lady of the Rock, The, I, xlix, l; II, 299, 308
Lamb, friend of Holcroft, I, xviii; II, 294, 298
"Juveniles" by, I, 277

Lamb, puns by, I, liv
quoted, I, xxiii, xlii
remarks on Holcroft, II, 316–17
Langham, Mr., I, 93–8
Lansdowne, Lord. *See* Earl of Shelburne
Lascy, Compte de, II, 144, 146
Laugh When You Can, II, 208
Laurel, Mr., I, 205
Lavater's *Physiognomy*, I, xxiii, 280, 281
letter of Holcroft *re*, I, xxxv, 281
Lawyer, The. See *Hear Both Sides*
Le Bon, II, 225
Leeds, I, 142
Leeds, Duke of, II, 242–3
Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, I, liii
Minna von Barnhelm, I, liii
Le Texier, II, 230
Letter to William Windham, I, xxxv ; II, 26
Letters to and from the author, disposition, I, xi, xiii
Letters from Holcroft, to—
Dunlap, Wm., I, xxxviii ; II, 89–91
father, his, I, 196, 201–2, 203, 240, 318–19
Freeman, Mr., I, 199–200, 256, 305
Garrick, Dav., I, 158–61
Godwin, I, xli., 313–15 ; II, 60–1
Greville, R. F., I, 207, 232, 233, 236, 237, 238, 315–18
Holcroft, Sophy, II, 40–2
Hughes, Rich., I, 200–1
Shelburne, Earl of, I, xxiv, 250
Sheridan, R. B., I, 187–90, 193–4
Shield, I, 310–13
Stewart, Dugald, I, 306–7
Lewis, Lee, I, 237
Lewis, the actor, I, 294, 300 ; II, 230
Lillo, II, 217
Linley, Thos., I, 244, 277
Litchfield, I, 30
Liverpool, Lord, II, 163
London, exports of, II, 192
London Library, the, copy, I, xii–xiii ; II, 192, 193, 194

Longman, the publisher, I, 275
Loudon, Baron de, II, 144–6
Loughborough, Lord, I, 228
Lovell, letter from, I, xviii; II, 83–4
Lover's Vows, II, 182, 188
Love's Frailties, I, xlviii; II, 19, 94, 99
Lowe, II, 171–3
Lowth, Robert, his *Grammar*, I, 172

Macclesfield, I, 26
Macdonald, Chevalier, I, 262
Macflecknoe, II, 236
Mackenzie, II, 181, 193
Mackintosh, Sir James, II, 33, 182, 235–6
Macklin, the actor, I, xvii, 123–7, 131–2, 136–8, 154
Maclean, Dr., II, 291
Maid of the Vale, The, I, 193, 194
Maitland, Gen., II, 229
Man of Ten Thousand, The, II, 95, 96–8, 99, 193
Manchester Commercial Coach, II, 113
Manchester, Duke of, I, 250
Mansfield, I, 40
March, Lord, I, 62, 68, 76, 104
Mariage de Figaro, Le, I, xv, xx, xxiii, xxvi, xxxvii, 243, 265, 272–7
Marriot, II, 223
Marsac, Mr., I, 205
Marshall, I, xxvi, xl, xlv; II, 129, 151
Martin, J., of Tewkesbury, II, 156
Martinet, French émigré, II, 225–6, 228, 231
Melodrama, I, xv, xxix; II, 300, 301
Mercier, Louisa, II, 117, 151, 229, 230, 233, 234
  marriage with, II, 248, 249–50, 293
Mercier, L. S., I, 261, 276, 307; II, 288
Mercier, T. and B., II, 180
Middleton, Conyers, II, 123
  Holcroft on, II, 132, 139, 169
Miller, II, 162
Mills, I, 169–70

Mills, Mrs., II, 180
Milton, I, 209, 310
  Holcroft on, I, 173
Mind, powers of, I, xvi, xvii, xviii, xxxi–xxxiii, lv, 314, 318–19; II, 64, 91, 108, 125, 139
Mitchel, II, 197
Mitford, Mary Russell, I, xv
Moddiman, II, 196
Moliere, II, 286
Montagu, II, 190
Monthly Magazine, The, I, xl; II, 136, 140, 142, 174, 316
Monthly Mirror, The, quoted, I, li, liii
  portrait for, II, 248–9
Monthly Review, The, II, 174, 181
  critiques in, I, xxi, 220, 227
  Holcroft in, I, xxiii, xxvii, xxviii, xxx; II, 29, 85, 107, 108, 206
Moore, Dr., II, 127
Moore, the attorney, II, 188
Moore, Thos., I, xv, liv; II, 55
Morality, Holcroft on, I, xx–xxi, xxix–xxx, 230, 291–2; II, 247
Morning Chronicle, The, I, 207, 215; II, 59, 167
Morning Herald, The, Holcroft in, I, xxv, 255, 266
Morning Post, The, II, 40, 42–3
Morris, Edw., II, 250
Morris, Capt. Thos., II, 197
Mossop, Henry, I, 138
Mountaineers, The, I, 267
Mountcashell, Lady, II, 293–4
Munden, Jos., the actor, II, 50

Napoleon, II, 215
  expedition to Egypt, II, 131, 133, 139, 144, 159, 163, 181, 189, 201
Narrative of Facts, A, I, viii, xxxv; II, 26, 56, 64, 69–71, 79, 194, 202
Newark-upon-Trent, I, 27
Nicholl, II, 191

Nicholson, Wm., I, 210, 219–20, 230, 236, 237; II, 84, 133, 136, 137, 173, 176, 181, 194, 217, 226, 227, 231, 247
Noble Peasant, The, I, 195, 207, 265–70, 306
Nodin's picture rooms, II, 202
Norfolk, I, 315
North, T., II, 203
Northcote, II, 209–15, 227, 240, 241, 248
Norwich, I, 315
Nottingham, I, 41–3, 192
  races, I, 46–9
Novels, the, of Holcroft. See *Anna St. Ives*, *Brian Perdue*, *Hugh Trevor*, and *Alwyn*
Nugent, Lord, I, 214

O'Connors, The, II, 170, 181. *See also* Irish Insurrection of 1798
Offoss, II, 132, 144–7
Ogle, Thos., letter from, I, xxxiii; II, 108
O'Keefe, II, 178
Old Age, I, 195
Old Clothesman, The, II, 105, 125, 126, 133, 135, 136, 137, 139, 140, 143, 144, 150, 153, 155, 156, 157, 159, 163, 164, 166, 169, 170, 171, 173, 174, 175, 176–7, 178, 180, 237, 242, 243, 244
Opie, John, II, 122, 131, 134, 136, 139, 147, 149, 150, 158, 169, 182, 187, 209, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 245, 247, 248, 249
  letter to Holcroft from, II, 289–90
Opie, Amelia, I, xl; II, 57
Opinions, Holcroft's. *See* Bage, Boswell, Criminology, Dryden, Duelling, French, Gambling, Ghosts, *Human Happiness*, Instinct, Irishmen, Conyers Middleton, Milton, Mind, Morality, Pennant, Political Principles, Perfectibility, Pope, Rousseau, Shakespeare, Southey, Stewart
Osmond, II, 202

Paine, Thos., I, xvii, xviii, xli; II, 33, 34, 49
Palmer, jun., II, 188

Pamphlets, political. *See* Gordon Riots, *Letter to William Windham*, and *Narrative of Facts*
Pantisocracy scheme, the, II, 83–4
Paris, trips to—
first, I, viii, 249–50, 255, 256–65
second, I, 272–3
third, II, 116–17, 253–4, 292–4
Parismus and Parismenes, I, 3, 10
Parkinsons, the, II, 216–17
Parliament, method of reporting speeches, I, 213–15
Parr, Dr., II, 181
Parry, Dr., II, 153, 188, 201
Parry, jun., II, 153, 173, 177, 180, 183, 187, 242, 248
Pennant, Thos., Holcroft on, II, 125, 126, 131
Perfectibility, I, xvi, xvii, xviii, liv; II, 13, 66, 125, 195, 227
Perry, Jas., I, 207, 211–15; II, 127, 131, 147, 180, 222, 227, 229, 230, 234, 241, 249
Peter the Long, I, xxvii, 258
Petion, II, 141–2
Phillips, auction-rooms, II, 234, 241, 242, 244, 248, 249
Phillips, Sir Rich., II, 140, 195
Physiognomy, Lavater's, I, xxiii
letter of Holcroft *re*, I, xxxv
Pilgrim's Progress. *See* Bunyan
Pinkerton, relations with, I, xl; II, 140, 150–1, 153, 158, 164–5, 173, 178, 187, 189, 192, 193, 194–5, 199, 204–5, 242, 243, 249
Pitcairne, Dr., II, 136, 138, 176, 177, 178, 179, 292
Pitt, II, 56, 75, 77, 143, 192, 239, 241, 242, 243, 245
Pixerecourt,—
translated, I, xv
quoted, I, xxix. See also *Tale of Mystery*
Place, Francis, II, 311
Political Justice, I, xxviii; II, 33, 107, 110
Polygraphic art, the, I, 171, 245–6; II, 116
Pope, I, xix, 172–3, 248; II, 113, 190, 197
Porson, Rich., II, 123–4, 139
Portland, Duke of, II, 123, 223
Portsmouth, I, 192

Posthumous Works of Frederick the Great, I, xxiii
Powel, II, 182
Pugh, Dr., II, 243
Pulteney, II, 226

Quaker, experience with a, II, 113
Quarterly Review, The, II, 316
Queensbury, Duke of, I, 62, 68

Racine, II, 147
Ralph, II, 292
Ramsay, Allan, I, 169–70
Ramsey, II, 178–9
Rans, II, 234, 243
Reece, Rich., II, 127–9
Reed, Isaac, II, 158
Reeves, John, II, 38
Reform, II, 29, 56, 58, 70
Register of the Times, The, I, 258
Remorande, Mrs., II, 223–5
Revely, Mrs., II, 135
Revolution, American, II, 13
  French, II, 13–15, 28, 30, 32, 67, 93, 101, 128, 195
Reynell, Maj., II, 191
Reynolds, the bookseller, II, 122, 137
Reynolds, Fredr., II, 193, 207
  quoted, *re* Holcroft, I, xlvi–xlvii; II, 301
Reynolds, Sir J., II, 148, 157, 169
Richardson, II, 193
Rights of Man, The, I, xviii, xli, II, 33
Ritson, Jos., I, xviii, 174, 226; II, 32, 79, 80, 129, 158
Rival Queens, The, II, 57
Rivington, John, the printer, I, 255, 264
  the publisher, I, 258, 264
Road to Ruin, The, I, xv, xvii, xxiii, xxvii–xxviii, xxxvii, 243, 274, 283; II, 50, 122, 177, 178, 180, 286
  production of, résumé of, and critique, I, 292–301
Roads, condition of the, I, 28
Robinson, Crabb, I, xviii, xxviii, xl, xli; II, 82

Robinson's, the publishers, I, 258, 273 ; II, 57, 130, 151–2, 174, 183, 188, 189, 192, 193, 194, 203, 242, 243
Rogers, Saml., II, 131
Rousseau, Holcroft on, I, 263 ; II, 33, 91, 113
  Hazlitt and Fawcett on, II, 128
Rugeley, I, 30
Rumford, Count, II, 144
Ruspini, II, 155

St. James's Chronicle, The, II, 51–2
St. John, II, 131, 221
Salomon. *See* Solomon
Sander, II, 286
Savary's *Travels in Egypt*, I, 258
School for Arrogance, The, I, xxiii, xxvii, 282–92 ; II, 193
School for Ingratitude, The, II, 193
School for Scandal, The, I, 184, 295
Schuckmacher, II, 285
Scott, Sir John, II, 45
Secret, The, II, 250
Seduction, I, xxi, 280
Sentimentality, I, xxvii
Seven Champions of Christendom, I, 3, 10
Shakespeare, II, 287
  Holcroft on, I, 173, 174, 177–8, 182, 262–3, 270 ; II, 147, 192
Sharp, Wm., II, 27, 28, 60–1, 64–9, 245
Sharpe, Granville, I, 119–21
Shelburne, Earl of, letter to, I, 249, 250–2
Shepherdess of the Alps, The, I, 193
Shepperson and Reynolds, II, 137. *See also* Reynolds, publisher
Sheridan, R. B., I, 184, 185, 186–8, 193, 277 ; II, 193, 209, 239
  appeal to, for a loan, I, 205
Sheridan, Mrs., I, 184, 193–4
Shield, Wm., I, 172, 173, 175, 197–9 ; II, 110, 122
  anecdotes concerning, I, 206–11, 275 ; II, 188
  letters to, I, 310–13
  letters from, I, 309–10
  radical, as a, II, 32

Shield, Mrs., II, 180, 188
Shuter, Edw., the actor, I, 166
Shyring, Saml., II, 178
Siddons, II, 206
Siddons, Mrs., I, 145, 149–50, 250, 278; II, 157
Smith, Rev. G., II, 136
Smith, the painter, II, 241
Smith, the surgeon, II, 178, 215
Solander, II, 197
Solomon, II, 110, 184, 188
Songs, by Holcroft, I, 197; II, 23–5
Southey, Robt., I, xviii; II, 85
Spence, Thos., II, 80
Spencer, Lord R., II, 229
Spouting clubs, I, vii, viii, 120–1
Spyring, II, 248
Stage-coaching, II, 113–15
Stanhope, Lord, II, 236
Stanton, I, 150, 153, 162
Stevens, II, 140, 150
Stewart, Dugald—
  critique of, by, II, 108
  letter to, I, 306–7
Stockton-upon-Tees, I, 172, 174
Stoddart, relations with, I, xl; II, 129–30, 134, 139, 143, 173, 203, 217, 242, 243
Stolberg, II, 286
Stranger, The, II, 99
Strolling players, I, viii, xvii, 130, 142–83, 220–1
Stuart, the artist, II, 242
Sturt, II, 187
Summer, Mr., II, 184
Sutton, II, 191
Swift, J., I, 90–1
Symmonds, publisher, II, 57, 60, 61, 64, 65, 194, 201, 204

Tale of Mystery, A, I, xlix; II, 299, 300–1
Tales in Verse, I, l, lii–liii; II, 308
Tales of the Castle, I, xxvii, 247, 258, 259, 306
Talk, II, 113

Tamworth, I, 27
Tarleton, II, 189, 208, 215
Tattersall's horse centre, II, 129
Taxes, current, II, 207
Taylor, II, 195
Thanet, Lord, II, 131, 136, 161, 170, 203
Theatre d'Education, I, 261
Theatrical Fund, The, Holcroft secy. to, I, 197, 199, 200
Theatrical Recorder, The, I, l, liii; II, 308
quoted, I, xx, 127, 165, 267
Thelwall, John, I, xv, xxxiv; II, 58, 67, 68, 69
Thomson, Jas., I, xxxix, 173
Tierney, II, 194, 208, 226, 227, 236
Tillock, II, 217
Tipler, Matilda, Holcroft's second wife, I, 157
Mr. and Mrs., I, 256
Tobin, II, 194, 203, 215, 216, 217, 227, 237, 244, 247
Tooke, Horne, I, xv, xxxiv, xli–xlii; II, 45–6, 58, 60, 67, 137, 204
Topham, II, 247
Towers, Jos., II, 158, 195–6, 242
Town and Country Magazine, The, I, xxiii
Holcroft in, I, 120, 197
Townsend, Marquis of, II, 234
Townshend, Lord, II, 131
Translations, I, vii, xv–xvi, xxiii, xxv–xxvi, 258. See also *Caroline of Lichtfield*, D'Obsonville's *Foreign Animals*, Savary's *Egypt*, *Follies of a Day*, *German Hotel*, *Hermann und Dorothea*, *Mariage de Figaro*, *Physiognomy*, *Posthumous Works*, *Peter the Long*, *Sacred Dramas*, Stolberg's *Travels*, Tott's *Travels*, Trenck's *Life and Adventures*, Voltaire
Travels from Hamburgh, I, xlix; II, 294–8
quoted, I, xxx
Trenck, Memoirs of the Life and Adventures of Baron von, I, xxv
Turner, Mr., upholsterer, I, 204
Tuthill, II, 194

Underwood, II, 177
Universal Magazine, The, Holcroft in, I, xxi

Vauxhall, songs for, I, 197–8
Vegetarianism, II, 129
Venetian Outlaw, The, I, 267
Vernon, Captain, I, 52, 62, 76, 86, 108
Villeneux, II, 110
Vindictive Man, The, I, l; II, 299, 307, 308
Volney, I, xxvi
Voltaire, Memoirs of, I, xxvi, 257
Voltaire, Holcroft on, I, 263; II, 32, 33, 113, 147
Voss, II, 286
Votary of Wealth, The, II, 230

Wakefield, Gilbert, II, 57, 127, 196, 247
Waldron, F. G., II, 125
Walking, II, 127. *See also* Holcroft, walking
Wallace, Lady, II, 162
Wallace, Lady (?), II, 165
Waller-Glover edition, the, I, xii, xiv; II, 318
Walpole's *Painters*, II, 194
Walpole, Horace—
  letter to, I, 307–8
  letter from, I, 308–9
Walsal, I, 151, 153
Ward, II, 202
Wardle, II, 66, 67
Warren, Dr. Rich., II, 136
Wathen, II, 180, 185
Watson, John, I, 62, 76, 81, 84–7, 99, 102, 103, 108, 112–14
Watson, Tom, I, 68, 69, 86, 102, 104, 108
Watts, Mr., II, 125, 135, 181, 188, 237
Webb, Mr., II, 125
Wedderburne, Alex., I, 228
Wedgewood, Jos., II, 197
Wedgewood, Thos., II, 216
Weideman, I, 207
Weisse's *Rosamund*, I, liii
Weld, Mr., II, 122, 133, 136, 171, 182, 188, 189, 192, 208, 220, 228, 237
Wemyss, John, II, 165

Westminster Magazine, The, Holcroft in, I, 196
Weston, I, 165–8
Wharton, II, 192
Wheeler, II, 235
White, Jos., II, 48, 54, 62
Whitehall Evening Post, The, I, 119, 195
Wignell, Mr. (U.S.A., mgr.), II, 88–9
Wilks, Mark, II, 57
Williams, David, II, 33, 197
Williamson, picture dealer, II, 159
Wilson, Rich., II, 112, 168–9, 184, 187, 235
Windham, Wm., Hazlitt on, II, 75–6
Windham, A Letter to William, I, xxxv ; II, 53, 64, 71–80, 194, 202
Windham, William, II, 123
Wits' Magazine, The, I, xxiv, l, 271
Wolcott, Dr., I, xl ; II, 158
Wollstonecraft, Mary, I, xvii ; II, 31, 293
  critiques by, on—
    Anna St. Ives, II, 2
    Road to Ruin, I, 293
    School for Arrogance, I, 282
    Trenck's *Memoirs*, I, xxv
Woodcock, John, I, 51–9
Word for Nature, II, 205–6
Wordsworth, Wm., on *Man of Ten Thousand*, II, 96
Wycombe, Lord, II, 217, 227, 233, 234, 242, 247, 248

Yarmouth, I, 315
Young, Edw., his *Night Thoughts*, I, 209–10